

TIP TOP WEEKLY

An ideal publication for the American Youth



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No. 308.

Price. Five Cents.

DICK MERRIWELL'S DISCOVERY

OR
THE EVIL GENIUS OF THE SCHOOL



BURT STANBISH

AS DICK CLOSED THE DOOR THERE WAS A SUDDEN BLAZE OF BLUE FLAME FROM THE IRON BOWL THAT FILLED THE ROOM WITH THICK PUNGENT SMOKE.

TIP TOP WINTER SPORTS CONTEST.

Another Great Opportunity.

There is a good old adage among athletes that says the muscle that does not have something to do all the time grows thin and weak. TIP TOP pins its faith to that adage, and, when it has trained its athletes up to a high state of physical development, TIP TOP does not intend to let them go back. It is one thing to make an athlete. It is another to keep him there. TIP TOP does both.

Here are the latest inducements to keep TIP TOP athletes at work and improving.

FIRST.

TIP TOP BASKET BALL LEAGUE.

For the Basket Ball Team having the best average for the season TIP TOP offers the following prizes:

1. **A Pennant to the Championship Team.**
2. **A Complete Basket Ball Suit to Each Player of Winning Team, this to consist of:**

A Basket Ball.

A Sleeveless Jersey (any color).

A Pair of Running Trunks.

A Pair of Ribbed Stockings (any color).

A Pair of High Cut Canvas Shoes.

Send in your scores as soon as possible. TIP TOP will publish them all.



SECOND.

TIP TOP ICE HOCKEY LEAGUE.

For the Ice Hockey Team having the best average for the season TIP TOP offers the following prizes for each player of winning team.

A Spalding's Shaker Sweater (any color).

A Pair of Hockey Skates (Canadian pattern).

A Spalding's Hockey Stick.

A Skating Cap (any color).

THIRD.

TIP TOP RELAY ICE TEAM CONTEST.

To the Team of Four boys who skate in the fastest time over Four Miles on Ice, each member of the team to skate one mile of the distance. TIP TOP offers the following prizes to each member of winning team:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.

A Shaker Sweater (any color).

A Skating Cap (any color).



FOURTH.

TIP TOP CHAMPIONSHIP ONE-MILE ICE RACE.

TIP TOP offers three prizes for the three best records established on skates over a one-mile ice course. The skater making the best time to receive the First Prize, which comprises:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.

A Shaker Sweater (any color).

A Skating Cap (any color).

The skater making second best time to receive the Second Prize, which comprises:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.

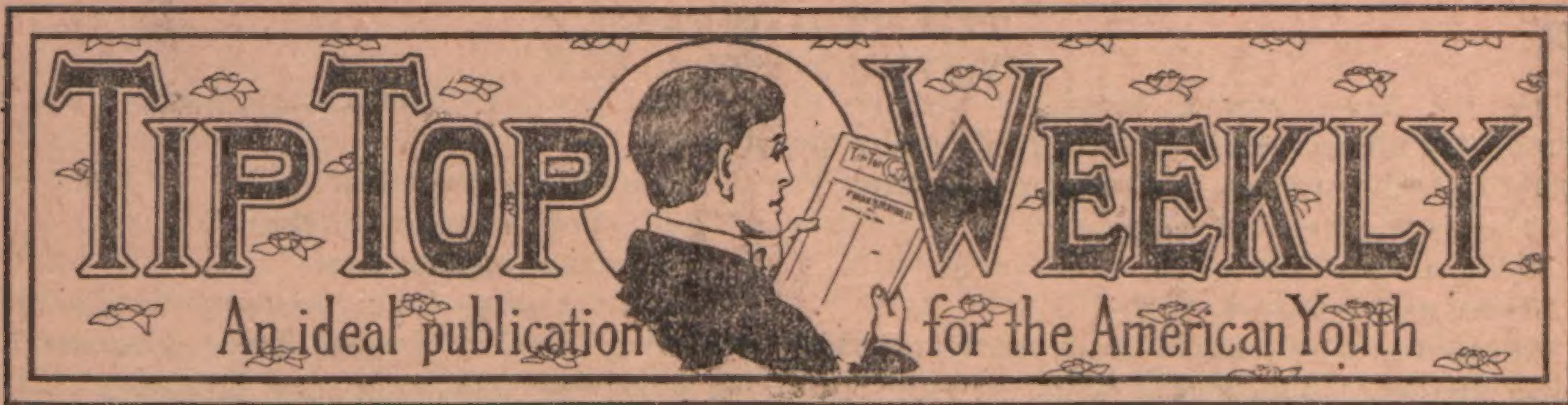
A Shaker Sweater (any color).

The skater making third best time to receive the Third Prize, which comprises:

A Pair of Spalding's Racing Skates.

A Pair of All Worsted Gloves.

COUPONS FOR ALL EVENTS WILL BE FOUND ON PAGE 32.



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Dick Merriwell's Discovery;

OR,

THE EVIL GENIUS OF THE SCHOOL.

By BURT L. STANDISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNCHBACK.

On the way to his room Dick stopped abruptly and stared at an uncanny figure ahead of him.

The waning winter afternoon of a cloudy day seemed to fill the corridors of the building with gloomy shadows, but there in the angle of the passage was something far more fantastic and unpleasant than the blackest shadow ever cast.

The sight of this motionless figure gave Dick a start, in spite of his steady nerves.

It was human, that he saw instantly, and yet about it there seemed something not exactly human.

And it remained motionless as a statue of stone.

Dick had a pair of keen eyes in his head, and, to his still further surprise, he saw the figure was dressed in the uniform of a Fardale cadet.

"He doesn't belong here," decided Dick, at once. "I am sure of that."

Immediately he stepped still closer.

Still the figure did not stir.

Not over four feet tall in its crouching position, with long arms that hung far below the knees, a twisted leg, and, worse than all, a hunch upon its back, it is not singular that the figure had given Dick a start at first glance.

In the gloom of the corridor it had strongly resembled a huge monkey or baboon.

But the face was human, though from its pale expanse gleamed forth a pair of eyes which were set on Dick with a steady glare.

In spite of himself, Dick shrugged his shoulders, betraying a feeling of repulsion.

It seemed that a baleful light shot forth from those eyes as this movement was observed. For the first

time the figure moved, seemingly seeking to straighten up somewhat, as if led to do so by the sight of Dick's straight, handsome, supple form.

Then young Merriwell spoke.

"Who are you?" he asked.

There was no answer.

It seemed that the unknown simply regarded him with utter scorn, disdaining to speak.

Dick was annoyed. Again he stepped forward quickly, lifting his hand, as if to grasp the other.

"Who are you?" he repeated.

Still without making a move, the other said:

"Don't touch me!"

The voice was harsh and unpleasant, like the grating of a file, and Dick felt a shuddery chill run down his back. Involuntarily he dropped his hand.

Before the steady stare of those eyes he was strangely ill at ease. Never before had he felt like this in the presence of any human being, and it annoyed him.

"So you can talk?" he said, sharply. "I asked you a question. Why didn't you answer me?"

"Because it was none of your business."

"But it is my business. You do not belong here. What right have you to be prowling about in this building?"

There was a brief silence, and then, in the same grating, unpleasant voice, the hunchback retorted:

"You're one of those fellows who thinks he knows a lot more than he does. You need to be taught a lesson, and I may find time later on to teach you. At present, I advise you to mind your own affairs, for I shall make it very disagreeable to you if you meddle with mine."

Assurance, sarcasm, ridicule and defiance were in the words and manner of this deformed fellow, who somehow seemed like a boy and yet was more of a man. He was not at all abashed by Dick, and the latter could see the creature's lips curling disdainfully over his teeth, of which he seemed to have more than a mouthful. It was a huge, ugly mouth, in keeping with the rest of the fellow.

"But I know by sight every one in this school," said Dick, "and I know you do not belong here. Yet you have a uniform. I think you're a prowler here without leave or right. Therefore I shall have to take care that you do not escape. You may have stolen something."

"Yah!" snarled the hunchback, fiercely, "I'm no thief!"

"I don't know about that."

"I do! Fool, why should I steal?"

"Why should any one steal?"

"From necessity—from covetousness. But there is nothing I need that I cannot have! There is nothing in the world I cannot have for the asking! There is nothing—save one thing!"

And then he added:

"But that is something money will not buy."

In spite of himself, Dick was taken aback by the passionate words of this deformed lad, for lad he knew the fellow must be. He felt a sensation of wonderment, doubt and uncertainty.

"All right," he finally said; "you may not be a thief, but you have not told me who you are."

"I don't have to! Go on! Go on about your own business! And I warn you to keep away from me in the future! I don't like you! Do you hear? I don't like you!"

"If I chose to be equally plain spoken, I might tell you that I did not like you."

"What do I care about that! You fool! You straight, handsome fool! I'll tell you why I don't like you. It's because you are so handsome—and so conceited. You know you're handsome, and you are proud of it. Yah!" he snarled, lifting his long arm and pointing a slim, bony finger at Dick's face. "I can see the conceit in your face. But some time you'll be taken down. Mark my words, some time you'll be humbled. And I may be there to see! I hope I'll be there to see! I shall enjoy it so!"

Then the creature broke into a hideous, chuckling laugh that was so low it could barely be heard.

Again Dick shivered, and his repulsion for the deformed fellow increased swiftly.

It seemed that the other could read his very thoughts, for he stopped that chuckling laugh to hiss:

"That's right—shiver at me! That's right—shrink and draw away! What do I care? Better go on now about your business. Go—go on!"

"Do you belong here?" asked Dick, not yet satisfied.

In fact, he was thoroughly dissatisfied and annoyed, though he tried to conceal it.

"Who gave you a right to ask me questions? What if I do belong here? Are you afraid you'll have to associate with me? Well, you won't! All

you have to do is to keep away from me. And you had better do that—you'd better!"

"Won't you tell me your name?"

"No!"

"Why not?"

"Because it is none of your business!"

Dick was perplexed. In no way had the hunchback satisfied his curiosity, and he still doubted the right of the fellow to be there. He was tempted to place his hands on the deformed creature and drag him down to the room of the head professor.

Even then it seemed that the fellow read Dick's thoughts, for he sneered:

"No you won't! You won't touch me! You'll not put a hand on me!"

"By Jove! we'll see about that!" exclaimed young Merriwell.

But, just as he was about to clutch the deformed lad, with one of his long arms the hunchback reached up behind him and opened a door against which he had been standing. Then he backed into the room, that low, chilly, choky laugh coming from his throat.

"Bah!" he ejaculated. "Bah!"

Up to the shoulder of the deformed youth leaped a big black cat, crouching on the hunch.

The door slammed and a key turned in the lock.

CHAPTER II.

BUCKHART'S STORY.

The vision of that deformed creature with the black cat crouching upon his shoulder remained before Dick's eyes after the door had closed between them. There was something about the hunchback boy and the cat that gave Dick a shuddery feeling, in spite of himself.

At last, with an effort, he turned from the door and moved slowly onward toward his own room.

"He has a room here—on this floor!" thought Dick. "I do not understand it. I'm sure he cannot be in the school. Yet he wore a suit like the rest of us. There is something very remarkable about it."

Buckhart was in the room when Dick arrived. He looked up from a problem he had been working over until the perspiration stood on his forehead, growling:

"Confound geometry and all such stuff! Shoot me if I can see through this—— Hello, pard, what's

up? I'll eat my hat if you're not white as a sheet! What's happened?"

Dick forced a smile.

"Nothing much," he said. "Am I pale?"

"Pale? Why, you look as if you had just confronted the spook of your murdered grandmother and she had accused you of being her murderer!"

Dick sat down.

"I haven't confronted a ghost," he said; "but I did run against something outside that gave me just about as much surprise as a ghost."

Brad slammed his geometry shut and faced Dick squarely.

"Then you've seen it, too, have you?" he said.

"It?"

"Yes; don't know what else to call the consarned critter. If he isn't 'it,' I don't know what he is."

"You mean——"

"Hunchy—yes, that's right."

"Then you've seen him?"

"Have I? We-e-e-ell!"

"When?"

"Little while ago."

"Where?"

"In his room."

"What?"

"Straight goods, pard."

"Why, how——"

"Accident. Don't think for a minute I did it from choice."

"I don't see——"

"Simple enough. Just happened to be coming up from recitation. Fell into a trance, I reckon. To tell the truth, I was thinking about a girl with dark hair, and the most glorious eyes, and the sweetest mouth, and the—— Never mind about that. You know I've got it bad, but you're the only one. I don't go round advertising my predicament to the public generally. All the same, I'm clean smashed onto Zona Desmond, and I can't seem to get her out of my mind long enough to study, or sleep, or anything else."

"Yes, that's a bad case," nodded Dick, with a faint smile. "But you were telling me about something else. Don't switch. Keep your mind off Zona long enough to finish your story."

"I'll try to, but it's mighty hard, old man. Well, as I said, I was meandering along in a daydream, and I kind of reckoned I'd reached the proper entrance

to our shack here, so I just opened the door and walked right in. When I came face to face with that thing you can bet your sweet life I halted right sudden and came out of my trance instanter."

"What happened then?"

"I had heart failure, pard," said Buckhart, in such a comical manner that Dick was forced to laugh. "I did, I swear! You see, I came near falling right over it. It was doing something on the floor, and it bobbed up suddenly. Say, Dick, if you've seen it good and fair, you know that was enough to give a man nervous prostration."

"It must have startled you a bit."

"Startled me? We-e-e-ell! It would startle a man of stone to have that thing bob up in front of him! But that wasn't all. It poked out one of its long arms at me, nearly jabbing a finger into my eye, and ground out some words that sounded as if they came from a coffee machine in need of oiling."

"What are you doing here?" it snarled. "This is my room! Get out of here! Get out instantly!" Dick, I got right out!"

"Is that all?"

"About. Only as the thing stood there ordering me out of his room a big black cat rushed at me from between his legs, spitting and snarling, with eyes as big as saucers and green as emeralds. It had its back humped, and it was uglier than any bulldog I ever saw. Yes, I went right out!"

"And didn't you find out anything about the fellow?"

"Not then."

"After that?"

"Well, when the door closed, I stood outside with a feeling as if somebody had been tickling my back with icicles. I stood there and stared at the door and wondered if I had anything the matter with me, for never before had I set eyes on 'it' or its cat. I didn't know there was anything of the kind around this ranch."

"Nor did I," said Dick.

"When I decided that it was no nightmare, I decided to find out how it happened to be here."

"Did you find out?"

"No; only it has been here two days now. It came night before last in the middle of the night."

Dick whistled.

"Came in the night?"

"That's what, pard."

"Douglas told me."

"How did he know?"

"He happened to wake up and looked out of his window night before last just after midnight. Thought he heard voices. He saw a team turning in from the road. It was a big sleigh, with two horses attached, and it drove right up to the door. Then Hugh saw a woman get out, assisted by somebody who came out of the academy. After the woman got out that deformed creature jumped out, and the woman hugged him and had a terrible time over him. It was just light enough for Hugh to see this much, but he couldn't see faces at all. He said he couldn't tell who it was that met them here, but finally a trunk was taken out of the back of the big open sleigh. The hunchback held the horses, while the driver shouldered the trunk and brought it inside. When the driver returned, the woman hugged the hunchy some more and made a great fuss over him, but he didn't seem to like it much, for he finally gave a push that would have upset her if one of the men hadn't kept her from falling. She seemed to be crying after that. The driver started to help her into the sleigh, but she turned of a sudden and ran at the hunchy again. This time he acted worse than before, and Hugh says he actually struck her. She got into the sleigh after this and was driven off. There were no bells on the sleigh or on the horses. That's all."

Brad finished his story, looked at Dick a moment, and then asked:

"What do you think of that?"

Dick shook his head.

"I don't know what to think," he admitted.

"Do you reckon 'it' has come here to be a cadet in this school?"

"It seems that way."

"But how can he?"

"How?"

"He hasn't passed any regular examination. He hasn't entered the school at the proper time. He's just sneaked into it under cover of darkness. He's a pesky critter of the night, pard; that's what he is!"

"There is a mystery here," said Dick, seriously. "It interests me. Did you find out anything more about him?"

"Nothing, except that one or two fellows have seen him peering out of his room and watching them."

"He hasn't appeared in the classroom?"

"I reckon not."

Then Dick told Brad of his encounter with the hunchback.

"Oh, he's a right jolly galoot!" exclaimed the Texan. "He'd be nice to have round the house! I'll allow that I'm going to keep out of his way, pard. I don't want anything to do with him."

"I don't care to have much to do with him myself," admitted Dick; "but somehow I have a feeling that it is to be my fate to have trouble with him. He has taken a strong dislike to me."

"Oh, I opine he dislikes everybody," said Brad.

CHAPTER III.

A BIRD OF ILL-OMEN.

It is not strange that the surprising appearance of the hunchback and the mysterious manner in which he had come to the academy created no end of talk at the school.

Whenever an opportunity offered the boys gathered and discussed the matter. All seemed eagerly seeking for further information, but about the only thing learned for some time was that the name of the deformed stranger was Hugo Darkmore.

The name seemed to fit him.

For a time the strange boy kept to his room very closely, but this did not last. Finally he came out, first appearing at recitations.

In the classroom he sat apart by himself, seeming to listen with a sneering, cynical air. Sometimes he smiled, and such a smile as it was! He looked far more hideous when smiling than at any other time.

It seemed that no one could look on the fellow without a feeling of repulsion. If inclined to pity at first, the sneering, malignant, hateful atmosphere of the deformed boy soon turned pity into dislike and aversion.

It was quickly noted that Darkmore was not called on to recite or demonstrate, or even asked a question while in the different classes. He simply appeared, listened to the others in his derisive way, and left without saying a word.

This added to the mystery, for the boys were unable to tell if he had been placed in the classes in which he appeared.

The fellow wore a uniform like those worn by the other cadets of the fourth class, and it was evident that it had been made specially for him, as otherwise

it would have been drawn all out of shape on his deformed figure.

Besides having a hunch on his back, the fellow walked with a limp, as if his crooked leg were shorter or weaker than the other.

Nor did Darkmore immediately take part in the drills, although he was always on hand to watch them. And nothing could annoy the boys so much as the piercing, greenish eyes of that fellow fastened upon them while they were going through their evolutions. Sometimes he laughed at them in that sneering manner, making scarcely a sound, yet with a choky gurgle in his throat.

After a while, he took to visiting the gymnasium, where he walked about and watched the boys at their various tasks.

Of all the scholars who entered the academy he seemed to be the only one to escape the hands of Professor Broad of the gymnasium, who imposed on each one special tasks to be performed in order to develop themselves properly and symmetrically.

But what could he do with a creature like Hugo Darkmore? It is likely that Professor Broad took one look at Darkmore and instantly decided that the case was hopeless.

Never before had such a student been seen at Fardale, and never before had a student had such privileges. It was most astonishing, and no one seemed able to explain the meaning of it.

Already were the boys in training for spring sports. The track team was working regularly under the directions of the manager. The ball-players were performing such tasks as were regarded best to get them into condition, and the gymnasium was a very busy place.

But even the interest in coming contests and speculation over who would make up the various teams did not prevent the boys from talking now and then of the hunchback.

It was a warm, springlike day, with the snow melting in the sunshine, that a group of boys gathered in knots on the parade ground and chattered away as boys will who find less opportunity than they desire to talk freely among themselves.

A bunch of yearlings were gossiping about the baseball team.

"We're going to be short of pitchers this year," said Tod Hubbard. "Harper was a good man, but

he's an old grad now, and there's no one to fill his place."

"How about Merriwell?" said Hal Darrell, looking at Hubbard in a queer way, for he knew Tod had no friendly feeling for Dick.

"Merriwell?" exclaimed Hubbard, with curling lips. "I knew he would be proposed."

"Why not?"

"Well, he's a plebe. Didn't a single plebe get a chance on the nine last year, and we had some good candidates, too."

"But the manager thought there were better men than any of our candidates."

"Oh, yes! because they were not plebes. In the past, it has been the policy here not to let plebes get onto the teams."

"That's right," nodded Singleton. "And it has cost Fardale dear more than once, for the school has not stood where it should in athletics. The prejudice against using plebes on anything but scrub teams has kept the school from many a victory."

"But Merriwell has ripped up tradition and precedent," declared Hubbard. "He bobbed up last fall and literally forced himself into the eleven. They had to take him on, plebe or no plebe."

"Well," said Singleton, "it was a mighty good thing for the school, wasn't it?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know?"

"No."

"Didn't we wallop anything and everything we went against last fall?"

"Oh, yes; but are you going to give Merriwell credit for every game we won? He wasn't the whole team!"

"That's all right," said Big Bob. "No man can be the whole team; but one man can change a team from a losing outfit to a winning one. Merriwell was the man who did that very thing with the eleven last fall. I say so, and I ought to know, for I played in every game."

"And you are very friendly to Merriwell, although you disliked him enough when he first came here."

"Friendly or not, were I honest I'd be compelled to confess that he was the winning factor on the eleven last fall."

"That's it! You give him credit for everything simply because, through lucky chances, he happened

to make one or two sensational plays that gave us victory."

"One or two! There was scarcely a game in which it did not seem that he was directly responsible for victory."

"Oh, fudge! You even give him credit for one of those games that was won by the interference of Darrell, who saved Merriwell from being successfully tackled at least four times. Merriwell made the touchdown; but Darrell was the man who won the game."

"And Merriwell was the first to give me credit for what I did," said the quiet voice, as Hal Darrell pushed his way toward the center of the throng. "What's the matter with you, Hubbard? You ought to know by this time that you can't keep Merriwell down by talking about him behind his back."

Hubbard gurgled and then exclaimed:

"You're another fellow who is all taken up with Merriwell, and yet you were his enemy not long ago! Whenever Merriwell downs an enemy for keeps it seems that the fellow downed is ready to turn round and become his friend. That's a new way of making friends."

Darrell flushed, looked annoyed and angry, but held himself in check.

"I should feel myself a cheap sort of chap if I failed to be as decent about that matter as Merriwell was."

"We were talking about baseball in the first place," said Don Kent. "We've all heard how Dick pitched on his brother's team last summer."

"What if he did?" said Hubbard. "That's no sign he can pitch. Merriwell had a fast team, and he could have put any one in to pitch in some of the games. All that was necessary was to have a fellow toss the ball up to the batters. The support he received did the rest."

"All the same, it's pretty certain Merriwell will be tried out for the nine in the spring," spoke Singleton. "He's getting into form now."

"Oh, yes! oh, yes!" came from Hubbard. "He'll have to go on the nine, for his brother will put him there, same as he has pushed him in everywhere else."

"You're another!" exclaimed a familiar voice, as Brad Buckhart elbowed his way forward and confronted Hubbard. "You know Frank Merriwell has never done anything of the sort. Whatever Dick has done he has done for himself. He needs nobody

to boost him. He's the real thing, he is! He gets there with both feet. And I'll bet a bunch of long-horns he'll make the baseball team. Never has anybody been able to hold him down, no matter how much they tried or what onery tricks they resorted to. I'm backing him as a winner against the field. You hear me shout!"

There was a moment of silence, broken by a low, chuckling, choky, chilling laugh. They looked down, seeing with surprise the grotesque figure of the hunchback, who had appeared among them in the most surprising manner, no one having noticed his approach. Indeed, it almost seemed that Hugo Darkmore had risen from the ground in some uncanny manner.

Suddenly silence fell on the group of boys, and there was a quick withdrawing of those in the immediate vicinity of the deformed lad.

Darkmore saw it, and his huge mouth closed over the big white teeth, seeming to smother the chuckling laughter, while the green glow sprang into his eyes.

"That's right!" he snarled; "pull away from me! I'm dangerous! I'll hurt you! I'll poison you!"

Still none of them spoke, but they stood silently staring at him.

"Yah!" he grated, lifting his long, clawlike hands and shaking them at the boys. "What ails ye? Look! look all you want to! It's fine and decent of you!"

"Pardon," said Singleton, feeling that it was not just right to stare at the deformed lad in such a manner and make him feel his own wretchedness. "You gave us a surprise. We didn't see you until——"

"I'll give you more than one surprise!" declared the hunchback. "Oh, there'll be lots of surprising things happen here at this school! Oh, there is going to be great sport around here, and some of the fine birds will have their feathers rumpied. Merriwell will be one of them."

Big Bob's feeling of shame changed swiftly to one of resentment. What right had this deformed fellow to thrust himself among them and interrupt their talk of spring sports!

"We are talking of things that cannot interest you," said Bob, grimly.

"How do you know so much?" snapped Hugo.

"Besides," said the big fellow, "you will find your classmates yonder. We are yearlings."

"Oh, ho! You are yearlings, are you? Ha! ha!

ha! Well, I declare! Isn't that perfectly awesome! Real live yearlings! Oh, he! he! he!"

The laughter of the fellow was an insult, and the sneering look on his face was maddening. His thick lips curled with contempt as he surveyed them.

"You seem to think you are something remarkable because you are yearlings," he scoffed. "You are! Oh, yes! you are most remarkable young—asses!"

Again that laugh.

"Oh, say!" muttered Don Kent, backing off. "Let me go! I'll have to hit him if I stay here!"

Although the words were spoken in such a low tone that Don did not fancy they could be heard by the hunchback, the keen ears of the fellow took them in, and he thrust out a long arm, pointing his finger at Don.

"Go!" he snapped. "But I'll remember you! So you want to hit me, do you? I won't forget that!"

Kent retreated precipitately.

"Anybody else want to go?" demanded Hugo, glaring round at them, the pupils of his eyes contracted till they were mere pinheads, from which came a baleful light. "Perhaps you'd all better go! You fine yearlings! Oh, you grand yearlings! Oh, you magnificent yearlings!"

His lips curled back from the broad teeth crowded in such profusion into his mouth.

Then he observed Brad Buckhart, who was standing quite still, hands on his hips, looking at the fellow.

"You're no yearling!" he quickly declared, pointing at the Texan. "You're a plebe—a common plebe—a very common plebe! You room with Merriwell. I know you. You think he's something wonderful, and he's nothing, nothing. He's a cheap fellow! He's a cad! He's a bluffer!"

"Hold hard there!" roared Brad, his dander rising at once on hearing Dick spoken of in such terms. "You may call me any old thing you like and I won't mind it, because you're not worth minding; but by thunder! you want to go slow when you talk about my pard, for I'll be chewed by grizzlies if I'll stand much of that guff! You hear the gentle murmur of my silvery voice!"

"Bah!" sneered Darkmore, with the utmost contempt. "Bah! You're a worse bluffer than Merriwell. I can see through you! I can read you! You swagger, and boast, and talk loud, but it's all put on

for effect! You're just a cheap, ordinary fellow; but you're not half as cheap as Merriwell. I'll show him up! He thinks he's handsome! He! he! he! He thinks he's strong! He! he! he! He thinks he's popular! Ho! ho! ho! Wait—wait till he loses his beauty! The time is coming. And he'll be weak as a baby, too! Then we'll see how popular he'll be! Then we'll see how many friends he'll have! I know all about it! How many friends have I? How popular am I? How many friends would he have were he like me? Why, even you—you would regard him with scorn and contempt!"

"That's a lie!" huskily declared Buckhart, sweeping aside the finger that was pointed at him accusingly. "Go on, you—you—bird of ill-omen!"

The hunchback seemed to fly into a terrible passion when Buckhart pushed his hand aside.

"Fool!" he panted, his face getting pale and then becoming bluish about the mouth and eyes. "You shall be the first. You shall feel your blood grow sluggish and thicken in your veins! You shall realize that the strength is slipping from your finger-tips! You shall see lines coming in your face, and it shall weary you to climb the stairs to your room! Bird of ill-omen, am I? Well, so be it, and you're the first on whom I throw my shadow!"

This was more than Buckhart could stand, and, with a growl, he clutched the mocking deformity by the collar, lifting his other hand, as if to inflict chastisement.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HUNCHBACK'S SCORN.

"Steady, Brad!" exclaimed a voice, as Dick Merriwell grasped the wrist of the uplifted hand. "Are you crazy! I'm sure you would not strike him!" Upon the final word he involuntarily placed strong accent.

Instantly the Texan released his hold on the collar of the hunchback, a look of shame coming to his face.

"That's right!" he muttered. "I'm daffy! But he's enough to set any one going."

Darkmore stood there crouchingly, watching them both with an expression of scorn. His thick lips parted and from his throat issued that quiet, choky laugh that was so chilling to the blood.

"He may as well have struck me!" he said, rasp-

ingly. "He wanted to, and it's all the same thing. I'll forgive the desire no sooner than I would the blow!"

"You should not have provoked him," said Dick. "If you'll pause to think of that, possibly you'll realize you were in a measure to blame."

Darkmore did not take this at all well.

"Who are you to talk to me in such a manner!" he hissed. "You think you are somebody here, but the time is coming when you'll be nothing—nothing!"

"He's liable to get at you pretty quick, pard," said Buckhart; "and when he does you'll just want to throw him down and jump on him! You'll want to, best you can do. He has a nasty way of ripping you all up."

Now in the heart of Dick Merriwell of late had been born a feeling of pity for the hunchback. Thinking of the fellow's misfortune, he had come to understand how his nature had been soured, and made crabbed and cynical. He could understand how it must hurt Darkmore to have everyone shudder at him and shrink from him.

Dick decided that it was possible Darkmore had never found anyone who would treat him the same as if he were not deformed, and this had added to his distrust and hatred for everybody.

Then Dick resolved to overcome his aversion for the repulsive chap and to treat him as a friend, if possible.

But, just when he would have attempted to make the first advances in that direction, he found it hard to do so without seeming to turn his back on his roommate and staunch friend, Buckhart.

Still Dick managed to force a pleasant laugh, saying:

"All right, Darkmore, we'll let it go at nothing, old man. That's what we're all coming to in time. Say, come over here with me and let me introduce you to some of the fellows."

An expression of surprise swept over the face of the deformed boy, but it quickly vanished, followed by a knowing look of scorn:

"So kind of you!" he sneered.

"Will you come?"

Those green eyes glared at Dick.

"I'm not a fool!" said Darkmore.

"I do not take you for one."

"You do! You think to deceive me!"

"No; you are wrong."

"Don't tell me! I know! I know! I see through your trick, Dick Merriwell! You can't play with me!"

Seriously, Dick assured the suspicious fellow that he had not the least idea in the world of deceiving him.

"Liar!" grated the hunchback, still with curling lips. "I know what you wish to do."

"What?"

"You would take me over there and place me on exhibition before your friends. You would make sport of me!"

"I swear you are mistaken!" said Dick, earnestly. "Such a purpose never entered my mind."

"Bah!"

"You have called me a liar. Had any other fellow in this school done so I'd have made him swallow the word in short order."

"Why don't you try to make me—why don't you?" demanded Hugo, beating on his breast with his long, thin hands. "Try it! Try it! Just try to make me take it back! I called you a liar, and I repeat it!"

"Because you have been deceived by others," said Dick, still with perfect self-control. "I'm sorry such has been the case, and I cannot blame you for being suspicious."

Again Darkmore stared at him in that doubting way, plainly astonished at the manner of this handsome lad.

"I give you my word of honor, that I have no desire to make sport of you," said Dick. "If you come with me, I'll introduce you to some of my friends."

Buckhart grasped Dick's arm, whispering in his ears:

"Are you crazy? Who'll want to know him?"

The hearing of the hunchback was something wonderful, for he exclaimed:

"That's it—who wants to have anything to do with me? Oh, I know all about you! I understand you all!"

"Not me," said Dick. "You have misjudged me. If you'll meet me, I'll be your friend."

He held out his hand to Darkmore.

A hush fell on those boys gathered about the two. They wondered at Dick Merriwell, and admired him for his courage, for, truly, it was a courageous thing to offer to be a friend to a creature so hideous and so despised as the mysterious hunchback.

Darkmore looked at the extended hand, and then

his eyes rose and seemed to pierce Dick like daggers. To Merriwell it seemed that the gaze of the fellow enabled him to read the secret thoughts of others.

The silence was broken by that low, horrible laugh, which sounded like the efforts of a smothered creature.

"Oh, you're slick!" said Darkmore, with infinite scorn. "Oh, you're clever! Oh, you have a fine way of fooling some fellows! But you can't work it on me! I read you! You pretend to be generous, but you're not! You're selfish, covetous, conceited!"

Dick's lips were pressed together now, and he stood very straight before this sneering, scornful deformity, from whose lips the withering words fell.

"You see what you get for offering 'it' your friendship!" muttered Buckhart. "Pard, it serves you right!"

"Yah!" snarled Darkmore, pointing at Brad. "You're the first! You shall feel the shadow first!"

Then he again gave his attention to Dick.

"So you wish me to go over there with you to meet some of your friends, do you? He! he! Perhaps you don't wish to make sport of me; but you are thinking how handsome you'll look beside me. You are thinking how great the contrast will be. Of course, they will admire you! And then they'll say you were so generous, so kind, so sacrificing! No one else would take me up, so you did it! But one thing will spoil your plans. I won't have it! You can fool others, but you can't fool me! You can't patronize me. Your scheme will not work."

"Very well," said Dick, quietly. "You have made your own choice. I shall not repeat my offer."

"You'd be a fool if you did!"

"That's right!" agreed Buckhart. "Come on, pard; let's mosey over yonder and leave 'it' alone to the tender mercy of the yearlings."

Every word the Texan uttered seemed to irritate Darkmore.

"Don't forget what I've told you," snarled the hunchback, glaring at Brad. "You'll feel the blood clogging in your veins. You'll see furrows forming in your face. You'll grow tired with the mildest exertion. When this happens, when you feel like an old man, think of me—think of the one you scoffed at and would have struck! Then you'll know the black shadow is on you!"

"Come, Dick!" again urged Brad. "If you don't

break away right soon, I'll do something to 'it' sure as fate! I will, I know!"

So he pulled Dick away, and they were followed by the low, chuckling, choky laughter from those scornful lips, as they walked off arm-in-arm.

CHAPTER V.

SELFISH OR GENEROUS—WHICH?

"What's the matter with you, Dick?" asked Buckhart, when, some time later, he was alone with Dick, in their room. "You look disappointed."

"I am," confessed young Merriwell, flinging himself on a chair in a dejected manner.

Brad stopped in the middle of the room, his feet wide apart, his hands on his hips.

"Blow me!" he exploded.

Dick rested his elbows on his knees, clasped his fingers together and stared at the floor.

"Blow me!" repeated the Texan.

Still Dick did not seem to hear.

"I suppose I know what's the matter," said Brad, "and I'll be hanged for a horsethief if I can understand it! You're disappointed on account of the manner in which that twisted, hump-backed critter gave you the marble heart when you offered to be friendly."

"Yes, that's right," nodded Dick.

"I knew it! Pard, you're just naturally too much for me! I don't understand you at all sometimes."

"That's not strange," said Dick. "I do not understand myself."

"Now, I know there's not another fellow in this school who would have done the thing you did."

"You mean—what?"

"Offered to shake hands with Hugo Darkmore and introduce him to your friends. Dick, the idea was all right in some respects, but in others it was foolish."

"I know it."

"You gave him a chance to throw you down before all that gang. He did it."

"It's not that I care about. I don't mind that."

"He called you a liar."

"I don't mind that."

"Then what is the matter?"

"He told me the truth!"

Buckhart gasped.

"Hey?" he exclaimed.

"That's right," said Dick; "the fellow told me the truth. He seemed to look right into my heart and see what was there."

"What do you mean? How did he tell you the truth?"

"When he said I knew I'd look strong and handsome beside him."

"Well, any blamed fool would know that! Almost anybody would look handsome beside that creature!"

"When he said I had thought it would be a generous thing to offer him my friendship."

"Well, if it wasn't generous, you can kick me!"

"It wasn't!"

"No?"

"It was selfish!"

"Say, pard; you're in a mighty bad way! You need some spring bitters, or something of that sort. Selfish? How?"

"Because, I thought I'd get credit for being generous. That was selfishness! It was seeking approval in the eyes of others. And Hugo Darkmore knew it."

Buckhart whistled.

"Say, pard!" he exclaimed; "you just naturally beat the deck! You did something no other fellow in this school would do when you offered your hand to that sneering, scoffing, snaky, distorted piece of humanity. Then, just because he sneered at you and refused to shake, and called you names, you get this way. You feel mean over it, when you have nothing to feel mean about."

"You're wrong, Brad; I have something to make me feel rather cheap. It's the fact that he read me like an open book. There is something uncanny about the fellow. He seems to have a way of reading a person's thoughts and understanding their motives. I did not understand my own motives until he laid them bare before me. Then I understood, and was ashamed."

"You think you understood, but you didn't. I don't allow he read your motives at all, pard. He made you think he did, that's all, and you took his say-so for the real thing. Can't make me believe there was anything selfish in your offer to be friendly with him! Not a bit of it! Can't make me believe you were willing to take him over and introduce him to the gang just to show off how handsome and strong you looked beside him. I know better!"

Come out of it, pard! Cheer up and forget the words of that evil-tongued snake."

Buckhart walked over and slapped Dick on the shoulder in a hearty way.

"I can't get over the feeling he gave me," said Dick, shaking his head.

"Well, I'll allow he gave me something of a creepy feeling when he spouted about my blood getting sluggish, my strength oozing out at my finger tips, my face getting furrowed and about my growing old generally. But I don't take any stock in such rot. I'll grow old in time, but that deformed libel on humanity won't have anything to do with it."

"Still," said Dick, "it seems to me that he possesses some peculiar power that is not quite natural. I feel it in his presence. I feel it in the glance of his green eyes."

"I'm another," nodded Buckhart. "But when I get away from him I opine it's all rot."

"I presume it is because he's such a hideous creature. That's why he doesn't seem quite natural. But I did pity him, Buckhart. I thought how I'd feel myself if the same misfortune had befallen me, and I could not help pitying him. I felt that it was my duty to be kind to him."

"I knew it, pard!" cried the Texan, in satisfaction. "You couldn't make me believe you offered to be friendly out of conceit or selfishness, or anything like that. Not on your life! It was just out of the goodness of your heart, though it was mighty foolish. I allow it seemed weak of you, old man."

"Well, every man has his weakness, though I'll acknowledge I didn't think this was mine."

Dick smiled a bit, which seemed to please Buckhart.

"Forget it!" urged the Texan, heartily. "You've done what you reckoned was your duty, and so you can rest easy. Hereafter you don't want to have anything whatever to do with that crooked imp of the pit. I opine his soul is deformed just about as much as his body."

"I'm afraid you're right," nodded Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BASEBALL CAGE.

Through the advice of Frank Merriwell, a portion of the gymnasium had been arranged as a sort of baseball cage. The windows were covered by wire

netting, and all along one side, dividing the great room into halves, ran a netting that extended from the floor to the ceiling. Thus half of the room, cleared of the apparatus that had been in use there, gave the boys a fairly good chance to practice in all kinds of weather.

Steve Nunn, who had captained the football team, was also the chosen captain of the baseball team, and he had, with great enthusiasm, set about the task of getting possible candidates to practice regularly.

There were more than twenty who responded to the call, and at a certain time each day many of these fellows were seen at work in the cage, directed by Steve.

The school, in general, remembering the magnificent victories on the gridiron the previous fall, betrayed great interest in the baseball team.

Of course, there were pessimists and croakers, who declared that Fardale stood little show of getting together a baseball team that would correspond in strength with her football team.

The strange thing about this was that, in the past, the academy had done much better at baseball than at football.

But surely the record of the eleven during the past season was something to be proud of, and it is not strange that many feared the nine could not do as well.

Steve Nunn was an optimist. True, the nine would not have Harper, who had done such splendid work a year before as the principal twirler for the academy, but Steve could pitch some himself in a pinch, being a "south-paw" man, and having one wicked shoot that was difficult for many batters to hit safely.

Still, Steve felt that it would not do for the nine to depend entirely on him as a pitcher. Although he loved praise and glory as well as any fellow of his years, he had a pretty level head, and he knew he was in no way a "phenom" as a pitcher.

At the same time Steve was willing to share the glory with some one else, or, if he believed it to be for the best, to give another who proved to be his superior, all the glory.

The one thing he desired more than anything else was the success of the team.

"We must have a winning bunch," he repeated; "and we're going to have it, too. Let the croakers croak. We'll show them something when the right time comes."

Some of those who were inclined to sneer laughed, and said that Steve fancied he could "do the whole job" himself. Still, the boys came out in large numbers to line up along the outside of the wire netting and watch the practice within the cage.

One day Nunn was giving his particular attention to those candidates for the team who seemed to have, or claimed to have, the ability to pitch. He had tried one or two, but without any apparent satisfaction to himself, when he was approached by Uric Scudder.

"Why don't you give me a trial?" asked Uric.

"You?" exclaimed Steve, in surprise.

"Yes. I know I'm a plebe, but you have said that you would make up the nine regardless of classes or precedent."

"So I shall."

"Well, I'm a pitcher," asserted Scudder, rubbing his chin.

Steve looked at the fellow and doubted.

"Where did you ever pitch?" he asked.

"On the high school team at home, and we had a corking good team, too. You should have seen us put it all over the Newports! I pitched that game, and they got just five hits off me. Then we just wiped up the earth with the Rumford Falls nine, and we——"

"Never mind that. I don't know anything about those teams."

"You asked me where I'd ever played," said Uric, resentfully.

"What curves have you?"

"A corking good out."

"Any one who throws a curve can throw that."

"Well, it fools more batters than anything else."

Steve shook his head.

"No," he said, "a drop is the ball that fools them, when it is worked right."

"I've got a dandy drop," asserted Uric.

"Do you throw an in?"

"Sure thing."

"And a rise?"

"Not much of a one," confessed Scudder, reluctantly. Then he swiftly added: "I don't believe anyone can throw much of a rise."

"They say Merriwell throws it."

"They say Merriwell can do everything!" returned Uric, scornfully. "I'd like to see him throw his great rise. Don't you want to see what I can do?"

Steve nodded, and told Kent to catch a few for Scudder.

Grinning with satisfaction, Uric prepared to demonstrate his ability. It was his one great ambition to pitch on the Fardale ball team, and his fear was that Merriwell would somehow keep him from accomplishing his purpose.

As he took the ball and walked out to position, he glanced toward the watching lads beyond the wire netting, wishing to see who was looking.

Standing quite alone, with his face almost against the wire, was Hugo Darkmore. The others kept aloof from him. His greenish eyes gave Scudder a shivery feeling, and his lips curled derisively as Uric looked round, as if he knew the fellow was seeking to discover how many were there to watch him show off his ability.

On all occasions Darkmore seemed to feel nothing but scorn and contempt for any fellow who sought to "show off."

Scudder quickly turned away.

Kent pulled on the big catching mitt and took his position.

Uric struck a pose, made a motion that indicated he would throw an out-curve, went through some fancy movements of delivery, and sent the ball speeding to Kent.

"That shows he's a pitcher of great experience!" observed Ted Smart, with the spectators outside the netting. "All pitchers who know their business never warm up! They just begin to throw curves right off to start with!"

Uric did not hear this. Fancying he was making an impression, he signed for an in-shoot and threw one. Then he threw a drop.

"He has the benders all right," said Bob Singleton; "but I've seen lots of fellows with curves who could not pitch. Haven't you, Merriwell?"

He turned to Dick, who was inside the cage, and had been throwing the ball about in a gentle, yet earnest way.

"I've never seen lots of pitchers in my life," young Merriwell confessed.

"You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do," nodded Dick. "My baseball experience has been decidedly limited."

"Well," said Big Bob, "it's a dead sure thing that it takes something beside curves to make a man a pitcher. He's got to have brains and sand."

"I believe that's true," nodded Dick.

"Well, that fellow has neither," asserted Singleton. "He likes to show off, and he might do well pitching against a team he knew was easy; but he'd go up in a balloon too quick if the batters ever fell to hitting him."

Scudder asked Captain Nunn to take a favorable position to watch his curves, and Steve walked over and stood where he could judge them better.

Uric did his best to impress Steve with his ability, and fancied he was progressing very well.

"You'll have to give me a trial, captain," he said. "I think I can make some of the other fellows look like thirty cents."

Then came the sound of a low, chuckling, scornful laugh, and his eyes were again drawn toward the hunchback, who stood outside the netting.

Darkmore's lips were curling, and in that peculiar, rasping way he said:

"You can't pitch! You're a flub! You tell about the wonderful games you have pitched, but you don't tell about the times you have been batted out of the box."

Scudder choked, and started to make a retort.

"I—I never——" he stammered.

"Don't lie!" shrilly exclaimed the hunchback. "It won't do you any good. Don't make any bluffs. Put the ball down, and give somebody else a chance. Put it down!"

With a sudden burst of anger, Uric flung the ball down to one side, saying:

"Why don't they keep that thing out of the gym! I'll do no more practicing while he is watching!"

This made Darkmore laugh all the more. Suddenly he stopped, plunged in amid some fellows who were watching from the side of the netting, and caught hold of Hal Darrell.

"Hey!" he cried, shrilly. "Here's the fellow you want, Captain Nunn! Here's the man who can pitch for you!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE BLACK SHADOW.

Darrell seemed taken by surprise. An expression of disgust swept over his face, and he shook off the hand of Darkmore, exclaiming:

"What's the matter with you? Get out!"

Darkmore showed his teeth in a hideous grin.

"Don't do that," he said, in a low tone. "You had better not. I advise you not to do it."

Then he looked into Darrell's eyes in a strange, penetrating way, causing Hal to shiver a little.

"What do you want?" asked Darrell, hoarsely.

"That's better," chuckled the hunchback.

Then he placed his hand once more on the arm of the other lad, and Hal did not fling it off.

Dick Merriwell had been watching closely every move, and he was filled with wonderment, for he saw that the deformed lad seemed to have some power over Darrell.

Plainly Hal felt a strong aversion for Darkmore, yet he had quailed before the fellow.

Now, the hunchback again turned to Steve Nunn, saying:

"Here is the man who can pitch for you. You should give him a trial."

"I can't pitch!" muttered Darrell.

"Yes, you can."

"Never pitched ten games in my life."

"That makes no difference. You can pitch. I say you can, and you shall."

"Shall? Why——"

"Yes. Go in there, and show what you can do."

He hesitated.

"Oh, I'll play on the team, if I'm wanted," he said; "but I don't care to pitch."

"That makes no difference," asserted Darkmore. "You shall pitch! I have said it."

All were amazed by this, and they were still more surprised when Darrell, with a forced laugh, said:

"Oh, all right! I'll go in and show myself up."

He tried to appear as if he regarded it as a joke, but to young Merriwell it seemed apparent that he submitted before the superior will power of the hunchback.

Darrell turned to Steve, asking:

"Want to see what I can do at that, Captain Nunn?"

"Why didn't you say before that you could pitch?" asked Steve. "Come on."

Darkmore chuckled to himself, as he watched Hal throw off his coat and vest and go into the cage.

"I'm no pitcher," protested Darrell.

"Don't believe him," cut in the deformed boy outside the netting. "He is."

"If he is," thought Dick Merriwell, "how does

Darkmore know? That fellow seems to read a chap's thoughts and gauge his ability to do things."

Darrell took the ball, and began to warm up easily. He did not start in at once to throw speed and curves, but slowly got his arm limbered.

Dick watched Darrell keenly, for he seemed to feel that it was possible this lad might prove capable.

At last, Darrell began to sign for the curves, and to throw them. He threw a wide out, a sharp in, a pretty drop, and then sent up an out-drop that looked like a "fooler."

"I told you!" croaked Darkmore, who was watching every move. "I told you! You see, he can pitch!"

"He's done nothing I did not do," said Scudder. "I fail to see anything wonderful about it."

"Yah!" snarled Darkmore. "You're a braggart! You're the kind of pitcher that quits when one or two errors are made. You pitch! Ho! o-ho! o-ho! o-ho!"

Down in his throat gurgled that scornful laugh.

"Well, he's just about sized Scudder up," muttered Singleton.

Steve Nunn began talking with Darrell.

"Tell him to throw a rise," came from Hugo Darkmore. "Let him try that."

"Yes, let him try it!" exclaimed Scudder. "Let's see how much of a rise he can throw."

Darrell made several attempts to throw a rise, but the best he seemed to obtain was a high swift ball.

"If you galoos want to see a rise," said the voice of Brad Buckhart, who had appeared outside the netting, "let Merriwell clasp his fingers round the sphere, and send it whizzing through the atmosphere. I reckon you'll see something."

"Hello, Buckhart!" exclaimed Nunn. "Where have you been? You did not come out for practice to-day."

The Texan shook his head.

"I'm feeling right bad," he confessed. "Don't know what's the matter with me, but I seem to be all broke up. I'm not sick; only about half-sick."

"Ho! oh-ho!" sounded a short, gurgling laugh, and the Texan turned, to see the greenish eyes of Hugo Darkmore staring at him, while the hunchback continued to shake, as if laughing inwardly, although he permitted no sound to escape his lips.

There was something significant, triumphant and

sneering in the look and silent laughter of the deformed wretch.

Buckhart thought of Darkmore's ominous prophecy.

"Oh, he didn't have anything to do with this!" the Westerner instantly decided. "I'd be a fool to think he had cast a spell on me!"

"Ho! o-ho! o-ho! o-ho!"

It appeared as if Darkmore read his very thoughts, and laughed at them.

With a burst of rage, Buckhart took a quick step toward the deformed lad, half-raising his hand.

"Strike!" said Hugo, looking Brad straight in the eyes. "Strike! You'll be sorry!"

The hand of the Texan fell.

"Oh, I don't want to hit ye!" he growled. "I don't feel like it."

"It wouldn't hurt," was the declaration. "Already your strength is escaping. Already you are growing weak. Already your face has begun to take on the bloodless look of an old man! You feel the black shadow! You feel it!"

"I believe you're daffy!" snorted Brad, turning away.

But he was impressed, in spite of himself.

Could it be that this leering, chuckling, hideous wretch had somehow placed a curse upon him?

CHAPTER VIII.

BREAKING THE SPELL.

"Can you throw a rise, Merriwell?" asked Steve Nunn, turning to Dick.

"Perhaps so," answered the lad addressed.

"Bah!" cried Darkmore. "Bah!"

"Don't mind him," said Steve. "If you can throw a rise, I'd like to see it. Go ahead, please."

Dick took the ball that was passed to him, and stepped over to the place where Darrell had stood a minute before. He began to limber up slowly, gradually putting speed into the ball.

After a little, Dick threw the common curves, but when he had displayed them all he stopped.

"The rise," called Captain Nunn. "You haven't given us that."

Dick gripped the ball firmly, and threw a speedy one.

The ball went straight as a bullet into the hands of Kent.

From outside the netting came the same chuckling laugh that had annoyed Buckhart.

Dick frowned when the ball was returned to him, took it and pressed it into his hand, adjusted it with care. Then he threw again.

Again the ball went straight as a bullet into Kent's big mitt.

"Is that your rise?" asked Steve Nunn, plainly somewhat disappointed.

Merriwell shook his head.

"Hardly," he said.

But even a third trial resulted the same as the first.

Dick wondered if he had lost the knack of throwing a rise.

His friends were disappointed, while his enemies were pleased.

Young Merriwell turned and looked toward Darkmore, who returned his gaze steadily. Somehow it seemed to the boy within the cage that the deformed lad was seeking to exercise an influence over him, and against the will of the hunchback he pitted all the determination he possessed.

The watching lads wondered at the spectacle of those two standing perfectly motionless and staring at each other in that intent manner. They looked from one to the other, and gradually they saw a look of strength and triumph settle on the face of Merriwell. A faint smile seemed to play about his lips, but he did not move his eyes until a cry of rage burst from Darkmore, who fell to stamping the floor and beating his breast with his thin hands.

Then Dick quietly turned to face Kent again, and then, without hesitation or doubt, he delivered the ball.

It seemed to start straight enough, but, shortly before reaching Kent, it gave a sudden jump and rose clear of the big mitt, striking against the boards behind the catcher, with a sound like a report of a gun.

Dick was thoroughly satisfied, but the rage of Darkmore knew no bounds.

Merriwell did not give the fellow another glance, although the actions of the hunchback caused nearly every one else to stare at him in wonderment.

"Look out for that jump, Kent," said Dick, quietly.

"Why—why, it jumped—it did jump!" spluttered Don.

Merriwell nodded.

"That is the way I throw a rise," he said. "It's a jump ball."

He threw it three times more, and then stopped.

"That's all," he said. "I don't care to hurt my arm."

"Jingoes!" exclaimed Captain Nunn. "I don't think I ever saw a ball jump like that before. It strikes me that almost any batter would be fooled by it."

"It's pretty hard to hit," said Dick, modestly.

"And hard to throw, too?"

"Rather. I do not use it often."

"Keep it for critical times?"

"Yes."

"How did you get on to it?"

"Trying to throw the double-shoot."

"The wonderful curve Frank pitches?"

"Yes. I failed to get the knack of throwing that double-curve, though I worked faithfully at it; but one day I threw a ball that seemed to rise with a jump. Immediately I set about seeking to repeat that performance, and I finally succeeded."

"Well, I see where you do some pitching for us this spring!" nodded Steve.

"Yah!" snarled a harsh voice. "I say no! I say no!"

It was Darkmore, who was clinging to the wire netting with one hand, while he shook the other at Dick. In that moment he looked like a huge monkey in a cage.

"What's the matter with that fellow?" said Steve. "Is he loony? Why do they let him attend this school?"

"I say no!" cried Darkmore, once more. "I have chosen the one who shall pitch for you. It is Darrell. Merriwell shall not pitch. I will not let him!"

This caused not a few of the boys to laugh, and their laughter infuriated the deformed fellow still more.

"Fools!" he snarled. "You think I have not the power to have things I desire, do you? Well, that's because you don't know me. You shall see! Let Dick Merriwell prepare to pitch on the baseball team if he wishes. When the time comes he'll not be able to do so. Darrell shall pitch."

He had pulled on his coat and vest, and left the cage. He now proceeded to hasten round to Darkmore.

"See here!" he exclaimed, in a low tone. "This will do for you! You're trying to queer me with everybody!"

"Nothing of the sort! I have said that you shall be the pitcher on the nine, and you'll become popular."

"What if I don't care to pitch?"

"That makes no difference. I wish it."

"You may wish it, and be hanged; but if there is a better man, I'll have to play second fiddle to him. I'd rather not pitch at all."

"Don't worry," said Hugo, attempting to pat Hal on the arm, and causing Darrell to draw away. "You shall play second fiddle to nobody. You shall be the first pitcher on the nine."

Hal turned away, shaking his head.

"It's easy enough for you to make that kind of talk; but you can't have things just as you wish them around here."

"Can't I? can't I? Wait! You shall see! You shall find out about that! It will be useless for you to rebel against me. You know it is useless to set up your will in opposition to mine. Don't try it!"

Hal made a gesture, turning away.

"Hang the fellow!" he muttered. "Why did they let such a crazy creature into the school?"

His face wore a worried expression, and he waited for Dick to come out of the cage.

"Merriwell," he said, "you understand that I'm not at all anxious to pitch on the nine this spring. I want to play somewhere on the team, but I've heard all about your pitching ability, and I'm not going to run against you. As for that fellow Darkmore, I don't know just why he singled me out; but he's got bats in his belfry, and no one should mind him in the least."

"It's all right," smiled Dick. "If you're a good pitcher, you had better keep in trim. More than one man will be needed to do the twirling for the team this spring. I understand that the schedule includes some teams that have been regarded as too good in past years. We want to get together, and give these teams a surprise."

They left the gym. together, unmindful that Hugo Darkmore followed them, muttering to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

SOMETHING STRANGE.

"Come, Brad; *reveille* has sounded."

Dick shook his roommate, who seemed sleeping heavily. Slowly Buckhart opened his eyes. At first he looked at Merriwell in a vacant way, muttering:

"What you want?"

"Time to get up, old man."

Gradually a light of reason seemed to creep into the dull eyes of the Texan.

"That you, Dick?" he asked, faintly.

"Sure thing! What's the matter with you, Brad? Are you ill?"

Buckhart lay there, soggily, as if it were too much of an effort to move.

"I'm tired," he declared, faintly. "Oh, I'm awfully tired, Dick! Never felt so tired in my life."

Dick was worried, for Buckhart looked unlike himself, having lines in his usually fresh, youthful face, which was now pale and sallow.

"I think you need a doctor, old man," said young Merriwell. "You are threatened with sickness of some sort."

"Never was sick a day in my life," protested the Texan. "Don't know what it is to be sick. I won't be sick now! I opine I'm getting lazy, pard."

He started to lift himself, but fell back on the pillow, gasping from the exertion.

"Don't know but I've got a touch of spring fever, or something," he admitted. "Why, I'm just like a baby. I haven't got strength enough to get up."

"You shall have a doctor right away!" exclaimed Dick. "How do you feel generally. Pains anywhere?"

"No, no pains; only just weak. I feel just about nine hundred years old. Say, pard, you don't suppose——"

The Westerner had managed to sit up in bed, and now he stopped, staring at his roommate, who suddenly refused to look him frankly in the eyes.

"I've felt this thing coming on to me for three or four days," said Buckhart. "It's crept on gradually, but every morning I've been worse. Sleep doesn't seem to rest me. I dream—I dream such bad things!"

He shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head.

"I wouldn't try to get up, if I were you," said Dick. "Just stay in bed. I'll report that you are sick, and you'll be taken care of properly."

"What, me—me for the bed? Me to the invalid list! Well, pard, I reckon not! I'm still the Unbranded Maverick! I'm still the Raging Terror of the Rio Pecos! I feel like a mistake, but I don't come from the stock that throws up the sponge and wilts. Whoop! Look out for me! Here I am!"

He managed to get out of bed, but the effort made him pant, and, at the same time, it brought no color to his cheeks. He tottered to a chair and sat down.

"I allow I'm just about the bummiest old maverick ever seen," he said, with an effort to smile. "I opine I'm a pretty tame-looking critter for the Raging Terror of the Rio Pecos. But I'm not down yet! No, and I'm not going down! I'll show that twisted libel on humanity that he can't do it! I will, you know!"

"You mean——"

"It!"

"Darkmore?"

"He's 'it.'"

"But, you don't think——"

"I don't know what to think, Dick. It's mighty queer. You heard him say what would happen to me."

"Yes."

"You heard him say I'd feel my strength oozing from my finger-tips."

"Yes."

"You heard him say I'd feel my blood clogging and running slow in my veins."

"I heard it."

"You heard him tell me I'd be like an old man."

"Yes, yes!"

"He said my face should turn pale and fill with lines. He said I should feel the black shadow upon me. He——"

Buckhart rose from the chair and staggered to a mirror, into which he glared, wildly.

"Look!" he gasped. "Look, Dick—look, my friend! There is no blood in my cheeks! The lines are there! All my boyhood has gone! I am like an old man! Oh, Dick, Dick!"

He turned away, covering his eyes with his hands.

Dick had his arms about Brad in a moment.

"This is foolishness!" he exclaimed, although he could not shake off the queer, uncanny feeling of horror that was on him. "Don't be so foolish, old man! It just happened this way, that's all. You know, and I know, that Darkmore could not have cast a spell over you to bring this about. It's perfectly preposterous!"

"I know it seems so, yet all he said should befall me is coming true! This is the first time I have confessed it, but I have felt it creeping over me since the day he told me what was to come. Dick, is that creature in league with the evil one? He must be!"

"I tell you it is not that!" panted Dick. "A doctor will tell you what is the matter, and give you some medicine for it. You'll come round all right in a few days."

"Still, I can't help thinking I might not have been this way but for that cursed hunchback! What if medicine fails to help me? What if I still get worse? I'll know then that the black shadow is on me for sure!"

"Even if Hugo Darkmore is in no way concerned," said Dick, "he should not be in this school. I can't understand why he was permitted to enter."

"No more can I."

"Nor how he got in as he did. No other fellow ever entered in such an irregular manner."

"And no other fellow ever had such privileges."

"That's right. He seems to think he's running things here. He tells me every day that Darrell shall pitch on the nine, and that I shall not."

"Somebody ought to shoot him!" exploded Buckhart, suddenly seeming somewhat like himself. "It would be doing a service to humanity! I don't know, but I'd like the job!"

He braced up then, beginning to dress.

"Do you think you'd better do this?" asked Dick.

"I'm going to!" growled Brad. "You know how Hunchy waits in the corridor for us every morning? He'll be out there this morning, and he'll grin if I don't appear with you. He'll chuckle in that creepy way, and ask for my health. I don't want him to know there is anything much the matter. I'm going to brace up. I think I'll be all right pretty soon."

He took a tumbler from the chair beside his bed, and filled it with water, drinking it dry in a moment.

"That makes me feel better," he declared. "Don't know what I'd do without plenty of water to drink. You know I have to drink this tumbler full every hour in the night. That's why I put it there where I can reach it without getting out of bed."

"Well, water doesn't hurt you," said Dick, with a smile.

"I reckon not! If it had, I'd been dead long ago."

Dick aided Brad to dress. If he had not the Texan could not have succeeded in getting out in time for roll call.

They left the room together.

In the corridor they came upon Hugo Darkmore, who seemed to be waiting just outside his own door.

"Good-morning," he croaked, with a derisive expression on his hideous face. "I hope you are both feeling quite well this morning."

Quick as a flash, Dick had him by the neck.

"You miserable creature!" he panted, the dangerous light blazing in his dark eyes. "Be careful what you do! Be careful! If I catch you at your tricks I'll crush you like a snake!"

Then he flung the hunchback up against his door, and turned away, Buckhart having clutched his arm.

"Yah!" snarled Darkmore. "You're next! Your braggart friend is feeling my power! Look at him! I told him what should happen, and it is happening. You're next, Dick Merriwell!"

Dick longed to turn back on the dwarf, but Brad clung to his arm, begging him to come along.

The choky laughter of the deformed boy filled the corridor as they hurried on.

CHAPTER X.

IN DARKMORE'S ROOM.

Buckhart went to the doctor, who made a thorough examination of him, asked him many questions, looked wise, and gave him some medicine.

The Texan said nothing to the physician about Hugo Darkmore and his threat.

The next morning Buckhart was somewhat worse than ever, if possible. It was only with the greatest effort that he managed to drag himself out of bed and get dressed in time, aided by Dick.

"I had another dream last night, Dick," he said. "Oh, it was horrible! I reckon it must have been something like the nightmare."

"What was it?"

"Why, I thought I was right here in bed, and that I saw the door open slowly, inch by inch. The manner in which it opened made me shudder. I wanted to cry out, but I couldn't. I had to keep still and see it open in absolute silence. I thought that was strange, for you know the hinges squeak. We've noticed it lots of times. I wondered why they did not squeak then. After a time I saw a black thing creep into the room with absolute silence. It was a hideous creature, partly human and partly a beast. It was twisted and misshapen, but it had horns on its head, eyes of fire and a forked tongue. I thought it was the devil beyond question, and I'll allow I was so thundering scared that I just seemed turned to stone. It closed the door in the same silent way, and came toward my bed. It was just about the worst feeling I ever had in all my life. I thought I was going to die, and I couldn't move a finger. When it got to the bed it just climbed right up on to my chest. Its weight was something frightful, but there it crouched, glaring at me, with its gleaming eyes. Pretty soon it put its lips close to mine, and began to suck my breath. I had a terrible struggle to breathe at all, and I tried with all my strength to awake. At last I felt that I was succeeding. And then the thing turned slowly into a huge cat. It

seemed that, just as I awoke, the cat jumped down from my breast and disappeared in the darkness. Now, what was that, Dick?"

"Nightmare, beyond question," answered Dick. "I had it once myself."

"Well, I don't want it again!"

"Nor I."

"Even after I woke up I had hard work to breathe, and it seemed that a weight had just been removed from my chest. But I drank the water in my glass, and managed to get to sleep again."

As Brad was finishing dressing, Dick carelessly crossed the room to the door that led into the corridor.

When he turned back from that door his face was pale, and his eyes gleamed strangely.

He had made a discovery.

The hinges of the door had lately been oiled, for they showed traces of it!

Yet he knew neither he nor Brad had oiled them! Who had?

That was an interesting question.

Why?

That was another.

When the boys left their room Dick noted that the hinges no longer squeaked, but the door swung open with absolute silence.

Still, he said nothing to Buckhart about his discovery. He wished time to think about it without being molested.

Neither of them paid the least attention to the hunchback, who was waiting in the corridor, as usual, and who spoke to them and laughed at them in his insulting way.

At an hour when he felt pretty sure the hunchback would be in his room, Dick Merriwell walked in upon the fellow, without stopping to knock.

Dick paused in surprise, for near the middle of the room, Darkmore was crouching over an iron bowl that sat on the floor, muttering something that sounded like senseless jargon.

Opposite the hunchback sat his huge black cat, apparently much interested in what was taking place.

The cat arched its back, and glared at the intruder, which caused Darkmore to look round.

Seeing Dick, the hunchback sprang up.

"What do you want?" he rasped, facing Merriwell.

Dick closed the door behind him, and started forward. As he did this, there was a sudden blaze of blue flame from the iron bowl, and, in a twinkling, the room was filled with thick, pungent smoke.

Dick was startled, but he kept his nerve, rushing at once to the window and flinging it open.

The smoke rushed out in a great volume, and soon he could see the hunchback, still standing near the iron bowl, while upon his shoulder crouched the cat.

"What are you trying to do?" demanded Dick, coughing. "Do you want to blow the building up, or set it afire?"

Darkmore did not answer. He took the cat and put it down. Then he stood quite still, glaring at Dick through the thinning smoke.

"Why did you come in here?" he asked, harshly.

"You haven't answered my question," said Dick.

"What were you doing? What happened?"

"You saw what happened."

"But what caused it?"

"That's none of your business," said Darkmore; "but I don't mind telling you I was making an experiment with chemicals."

"Well, you'll go out through the roof some day when you are making an experiment," declared Dick.

"If you mind your own business and keep away it's not likely you will be harmed by that occurrence," returned the hunchback, scornfully. "There's the door. You had better get out now."

"I'm in no hurry. I came here for a purpose, and I'll go when I get ready."

"Yah!" snarled the hunchback. "You may go before that! I have a way to make you go."

"I hardly think so," asserted Dick. "I do not mind your tricks, and I take them for what they are worth."

"What's that?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, eh? Oh, you shall see some day!"

"I do not mind your threats, Darkmore. You waste your breath in flinging them at me."

"Soon it will be something more than threats."

"Nor do I mind a creature whose deeds are done in darkness—who fears the light."

"Oh, you talk very boldly!"

"See here, Darkmore, why do you choose to make yourself detested by every one?"

The hunchback flung up his long arms and laughed.

"Why do I choose?" he exclaimed, derisively. "What choice have I in the matter? Look at me! Do you admire my symmetrical figure? Do you regard me as handsome? Bah! I know! In your heart you are disgusted! In your heart you scorn me! You cannot deceive me! All my life I have been used to it. I have seen men and women stare at me and shudder. I have seen children run shrieking to hide from me! I have known nothing but scorn and loathing, and now I am not fool enough to expect anything else."

Dick could not help being affected by the dramatic words and manner of the hideous lad.

"Still," he said, "if your soul were not deformed, as well as your body, you might find friends who would sympathize with——"

"Sympathy! Bah! Pity! Bah! I don't want it! I don't have it! Am I to blame that I am what I am?"

"No, but——"

"I didn't make myself what you see me any more than you made yourself what you are. What if you had lived all your life amid scorn, and contempt, and loathing! I think you would find you hate everybody. I can't be deceived with pretended kindness. I know the owner of the hand that offers me a kindness is shrinking from me, and it makes me hate him! It makes me long to hit him!"

Dick was seized by the conviction that this fellow was irreclaimable. His nature had been soured, his better inclinations had been perverted, and now he took absolute delight in sarcasm, and scorn, and hatred for everybody and everything. It was his revenge on the world for loathing him and shrinking from him.

"Now, what do you want?" fiercely demanded Darkmore. "Out with it! Then go!"

The hunchback pointed toward the door, his feet apart and the black cat between them, its glittering eyes fastened on Dick, with an almost human look of distrust and hatred.

"You have seen fit to refuse my offer of friendship, which was made in perfect good faith," said Dick. "You have threatened me, but I do not mind that. You have also threatened my friend, Buckhart."

"He feels it!" chuckled Hugo. "He feels it! The shadow is on him!"

"You are a creature of tricks! A thing of darkness! But I have discovered some of your ways, and now I warn you. Quit it! If you do not, my hands shall find you some time in the darkness, and it will be a bad thing for you. Whatever happens to you then I'll not hold myself responsible for. Do you understand me?"

Still that chuckling, scornful laughter sounded in the throat of the deformed boy.

"Bah!" he cried. "Is that all you have to say?"

"You know what I mean. Oil cannot make your movements silent enough to enable you to deceive me. You know what I mean! It is not necessary for me to say more, but take care!"

Dick had intended to say more when he came there to that room; but now he decided that this was quite enough. Further words would be wasted on the fellow, and so he disdainfully turned his back on Darkmore and walked to the door.

He heard the cat spitting and snarling at his heels, but the hunchback did not move.

Without looking round, Dick went out.

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE NIGHT.

Thinking of the matter afterward, Merriwell was strangely impressed by what he had seen on entering the room of the deformed lad. The picture of Darkmore squatting over the iron bowl, with the black cat sitting opposite, soberly watching him, and the sudden burst of blue flames and smoke that followed, made the whole affair seem weird and unnatural to Dick.

"If these were the days of superstition and belief in the black art," thought young Merriwell, "surely I should be convinced that Darkmore must be possessed of unnatural powers. I should think him a wizard, or something of the sort. But such a thing is folly, and I know he's simply a hideous creature, with a deformed body, and a no less misshapen soul."

At first, Dick thought he would not tell Buckhart about it, but the desire to do so grew upon him. Finally, stating that he had taken a fancy to see what Darkmore was like in his own room, Dick told his roommate of the adventure, but did not tell what words of warning he had spoken.

Buckhart, pale and listless, listened to the story, shaking his head soberly when it was finished.

"Tell you what, Dick," he said, "I'm not easily scared of anything that walks on two legs, but I must admit that that varmint gives me the creeps. You don't reckon he really can have any power we know nothing about, do you? I mean anything supernatural."

Dick shook his head, laughing.

"Nothing of the sort," he said.

"But the blue fire and the smoke?"

"Just a sudden combustion of chemicals, as he explained, nothing more."

"The cat——"

"An ordinary black cat, that has partaken of the vicious, disagreeable nature of its master."

"I think you're right, old man; but still I can't shake off that feeling."

That night Dick Merriwell retired with the full

determination to keep awake. He lay in bed while the hours slipped away, fighting off the desire to close his eyes, listening, peering into the darkness of his room, and holding every sense alert.

Buckhart slept soundly and heavily.

A boy who, for some reason or other, has tried to pass a night in bed without sleeping knows how difficult the task becomes, and how the inclination to sleep grows stronger and stronger as the silent hours wear on.

With Dick it became a battle, for, being of an energetic temperament, all his days were spent in such activity that nature demanded sleep as a restorer of his forces.

Midnight passed, and the later hours of the night stole on with stealthy steps.

Still nothing happened.

Morning was not far away, when, at last, the watching boy succumbed and slept.

Still, his nerves were at a tension, and he did not sleep soundly.

After a time, something awoke him.

He did not stir, but remained perfectly still, listening intently.

From the adjoining alcove came the heavy, rasping sound of breathing, as if Buckhart felt great distress.

Dick was tempted to spring up at once, and rush to his friend, but he governed the impulse and got out of bed with as much caution and silence as possible. His feet made no sound on the floor, and, in a moment, he was in the adjoining alcove.

Then, in the darkness, something rushed past his feet, and scudded across the room. He heard a scratching sound, and for one moment caught a glimpse of a black shadow that flitted through the open transom above the door.

Naturally Dick's heart had given a great jump, and was pounding in his bosom, but he was ready for anything that might follow.

He stood still and waited.

A groan came from the bed, close at hand.

"Buckhart!" exclaimed Dick.

Brad awoke.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Who called?"

Merriwell struck a match, and the light showed him Brad's pale face on the pillow.

Nothing more.

"I heard you breathing heavily," said Dick, "and I came to see if anything was the matter."

"I've just had another of those horrible dreams," said the Texan. "I thought there was a fearful weight on my breast, like a huge stone, and I was struggling to throw it off. I could not succeed, and it was slowly pressing the breath from my lungs. I was trying hard to breathe, but I could not fill my lungs. I'm glad you woke me, Dick. Great thunder! I never used to know what it was to dream! What do you suppose ails me?"

"Give it up."

"Give me that glass of water. I'm thirsty."

Dick's match went out.

"Wait," he said, and struck another.

Then he took the glass of water from the chair, and looked at it.

"I'll get you some that is fresher," he said, proceeding to throw that out and bring more water.

Buckhart drank eagerly.

For a little while, Dick sat on the edge of the bed and talked to his friend. At last, Buckhart fell asleep, and Merriwell returned to his own bed.

But not until he had carefully closed and fastened the transom over the door!

"It will remain closed after this," he thought.

He was satisfied that there had been something in that room, for he knew he had not been deceived by fancy into thinking an object fled past him, and a shadow flitted through the open transom.

Dick did not sleep any more that night.

In the morning, however, he was pleased to find that Buckhart seemed slightly better than he had been of late.

"Guess that doctor's medicine is going to do me good, pard," said the Texan.

"I hope so," smiled Dick.

"I don't seem so weak this morning."

"That's good."

"But it's queer about the dream I had, and for a fact I'm sore right here on the chest, as if a weight had pressed me there. Why do you suppose I feel like that?"

"Perhaps the medicine has something to do with it," said Dick, evasively.

He did not tell Buckhart of the thing that had rushed past him in the darkness and fled through the transom.

As usual, Darkmore was lingering outside his door when they passed down the corridor, but this morning he seemed to regard Buckhart with something like anxiety and disappointment.

Brad walked past with the strongest step he could command, not deigning to give the hunchback a look.

Dick smiled, quietly.

Behind their backs the dwarf shook his hands at them, and whispered to himself:

"All right! Smile! smile! When I am done with the other I'll turn my attention to you! You are next on the list! You regard me with scorn, because you are strong, but I have a hundred ways of robbing you of your strength, and making you so weak I can master you with one hand!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHADOW FLEES.

After that Dick was careful to keep the transom tightly closed and secured.

Buckhart seemed to improve.

Then came a relapse.

On the third morning he was worse than ever, and thoroughly discouraged.

Dick realized that he had slept soundly all through the night, and he was provoked with himself, for before coming to Fardale he would have awakened at

the slightest sound or movement near him that was not just what it should be.

And Dick Merriwell felt sure there had been an intruder in that room.

"But he'll come again," he muttered. "Next time I'll be ready."

On the following night Dick prepared a queer arrangement, which was a heavy black thread strung across Buckhart's alcove about a foot from the floor and fastened with tacks to the wall at one side and the dividing partition on the other.

Near one end of the thread Dick attached a tiny silver bell.

The Texan watched his friend with great curiosity.

"Now will you kindly explain whatever you are doing that for!" he exclaimed.

"I'm a witch-doctor," laughed Dick; "and I'm preparing to keep the evil spirits away from you to-night."

This answer did not satisfy the Texan, but it was all the explanation he could get from Dick, who smilingly continued to insist that the thread and the tiny bell were placed there to keep evil spirits away from Buckhart.

"You're not putting up any such arrangement to protect yourself," said the Westerner.

"I don't need it."

"Why not?"

"The evil spirits have not molested me thus far. They are giving their entire attention to you."

"And they're making a roaring old success of the job," admitted the Westerner, dolefully.

"But I'm going to queer their little game," declared Merriwell, positively. "Incidentally, at the same time, I may be able to expose them. That's what I want to do."

When Buckhart retired Dick directed him to step over the string, and take pains not to strike and break it. This was done.

Dick, himself, went to bed and slept. But, before retiring he had caused the little bell to tinkle, and had

fixed the sound in his mind so that he felt it would awaken him as quickly as the booming of a cannon.

Some time in the darkest hours of the night the bell tinkled forth its alarm!

Instantly, as if he had received an electric shock, Dick Merriwell sprang from his bed and leaped out of the alcove.

In the darkness he saw something move, and a bound took him upon it. In his arms he clasped a living, breathing, writhing thing!

"Got you!" panted Dick, exultantly.

A hissing sound came from the creature, and it struggled to break away.

"Not much!" laughed Merriwell. "I trapped you this time, and now I'm going to take a look at you."

But he was astonished by the strength displayed by the thing he had clutched, and the struggle that ensued was fierce in the extreme. Dick tried to fling the unknown down and pin him to the floor, but was repeatedly prevented from doing so.

"What's that?" called Buckhart, from the bed.

"Strike a light!" cried Dick.

"What are you doing?"

"I've got the thing that has caused all the trouble with—— No, you don't!"

Buckhart got out of bed and sought the matches.

Then, of a sudden, into Dick's eyes and mouth was dashed a liquid that burned like fire, and seemed to rob him of breath and strength. He staggered back, releasing his hold on the intruder, fearing he had been blinded.

Then, almost instantly, the door opened, something shot out like a huge dog, and the door closed with a slam.

"Stop—stop him!" gasped Dick, reaching out blindly in the darkness.

"Too late!" exclaimed Buckhart, striking a match, and discovering his friend with one hand clasped over his eyes, while the other was outstretched as if to clutch something. "He's gone! What's the matter?"

The student's lamp was lighted by the trembling

fingers of the Texan, who then turned once more to Merriwell.

"Where is the wash-basin?" gasped Dick. "I—I must wash this stuff—off!"

"What did he do?" grated the Texan, infuriated. "Has he—what's the matter, pard?"

"He threw something in my eyes—something that seemed to take away my breath and strength."

"Hartshorn!" exclaimed Brad, as he obtained a smell of the stuff. "Here, let me wash it off! Did any of it get into your eyes? Come, pard, let me!"

It was nearly half-an-hour before Dick was able to see, and then his eyes were like coals of fire, so red were they.

"He escaped!" muttered Merriwell, regretfully. "He had to do something to get away. I had him fast when he flung the stuff in my face."

"Who was it?"

"Well, I did not see, you know, but I'll swear I felt a hunch upon his back."

"Darkmore?"

"I could swear to it, yet I have no absolute proof. It's too bad, for I've been waiting to catch him this way. I knew his cat alone did not bring you to your present condition."

"His cat?"

"Yes, for it was his cat I discovered here in the first place. It was his cat that somehow entered by the open transom over our door. It was his cat that crouched on your breast and sucked your breath, as they say cats will do with children. The cat caused you to have those dreams."

Brad was astonished.

"I swear I believe you are right!" he exclaimed.

"I am sure of it," said Dick, as he bound a handkerchief over his eyes. "But I knew something besides the cat alone had caused your trouble. I discovered the hinges of our door had been oiled, and I decided that Darkmore himself crept in here. Then I planned to capture him. But he escaped, leaving nothing behind to enable us to prove any charge against him. He will not come again, and I think

you'll get well, old man, without the aid of doctor's medicine."

"If I do, I'll have you to thank, pard. But what did he do to me, anyhow? How did he knock me out like this?"

"I have thought of an explanation. Every night you place a glass of water on a chair beside your bed to be drunk in the night. Darkmore found it out somehow, and he has been stealing in here and putting something into the water in your glass. One morning I found a few grains of white powder beside the glass. I decided at once that you were drinking something of which you were not aware."

"Good Lord!" gasped the Texan. "What will we do?"

"Well, I think it will be a good plan to put a few bolts on the door and the transom. When that is done, we'll have no further trouble of the sort that has been creating all the excitement."

* * * * *

Dick was right. The bolts were placed on the door, Buckhart threw away his medicine, and there came about a change for the better. The Texan improved steadily and was like himself in about a week.

It was useless to make charges against Hugo Darkmore, for there was no evidence with which to convict him, so the deformed rascal remained in the school, by choice an outcast, without a single friend save his cat.

It seemed that his hatred for Dick Merriwell, who had baffled him, grew daily, and it enraged him to observe that Dick regarded him with an air of absolute indifference and disdain.

"I'll bring you down some day!" he told himself, thinking of young Merriwell. "I'll crush you under my feet and make you beg, you proud, handsome fool!"

Could he?

THE END.

The next number (309) will contain "Dick Merriwell's Revenge; or, Fighting a Desperate Enemy."



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STREET & SMITH'S TIP TOP WEEKLY,
238 William St., New York City.

APPLAUSE.

I thought I would write you a few lines, as I have seen nothing from this place. I was glad to see that Dick and Darrell have become friends. I think that all of the Tip Top readers will welcome Dick and the Fardale series. I like Teddy and his kind of fun. I think Frank made the right choice in Inza. It seems that Bart is "slightly disfigured but still in the ring." I would much rather see Dick kick Mr. Levy around than Bart Hodge. I would like for a few of those people who want to have him put out give a few reasons for what they think. Bart has always been true to Frank since they became friends.

'Tis now a paper I want to read,
And I will buy it with all speed.
No "mighty fine" will do for me—
I can't be fooled but once, you see.
Now months have hurried—not a few,
And still the paper is true and blue.
The Tip Top Weekly, you can bet,
Has never found an equal yet.

Yours truly,

WILL McLEES.

Ruston, La.

Let us hear from Louisiana again, as you evidently appreciate good reading and understand Tip Top very thoroughly.

I never fail to read the letters in the Applause, and of late have noticed that some few writers are leading a hopeless attack against Bart Hodge. Some half dozen of them are raking up all the bad deeds of Hodge, and, just because he has a bad temper, and does wrong at times, they call him hard names and say he should not be a member of the "flock." Now, of all Frank's friends, there is not one more loyal to Frank, not one more willing to sacrifice everything, even life itself, for Frank's benefit than is Bart Hodge. He, Bruce Browning, Harry Rattleton and Jack Diamond are "true as steel" to Frank, and their mutual loyalty is the bond that holds them together. Bruce is lazy, Harry is excitable, Jack is fiery and aristocratic, and Bart is ill-tempered at times and dogged. The trouble with those who are now saying unkind things about Hodge is that they do not view the matter in its true light. They allow themselves to see only his bad traits, and ignore his good ones. Some of Bart's friends err also in saying that Frank could not have done certain things without Bart. That is not true, for Frank could have secured other assistance. The question is not, "What could Frank Merriwell have done without Bart Hodge?" but "What could Bart Hodge have done without Frank Merriwell?" It is, therefore, strictly for Bart's good that Frank made him a member of the "flock," and until he tells Bart to leave it no one else

has the right. It is not my intention to criticise those who have written against Hodge, for they have as much right to express an opinion as I have, but to show them that they should not criticise any one unjustly as they have Hodge. They should hold out a helping hand, instead of giving one more kick to the person rolling down the hill. And to change the subject somewhat and give a new question for discussion, I say that Hal Darrell deserves and will win Doris Templeton. Best wishes to Mr. Standish, Street & Smith and all Tip Top readers. JASON.

Gayoso, Mo.

Your defense of Bart is a very strong, intelligent one, and should settle, once and for all, the dispute about him. Bart must indeed be flattered by the loyalty his friends show him in so generously defending him.

I see you do not have much in the Applause Column from the Canadian boys, although I know hundreds who read the Frank Merriwell stories. I think it the finest paper every printed for boys. I have read them all from the first number to the present one, and hope to be reading them until you discontinue to publish them. I am greatly interested in the sports, as I take part in most kinds myself. I would like to see Frank play la crosse. They have played every other game that can be named, except the great Canadian game. I am not the only one on this side, and it might interest some of the American boys, too. Hoping Tip Top will last forever, and with best wishes to Street & Smith and Burt L. Standish, I remain, C. B. Q.

Nanaimo, B. C.

Glad to see our Canadian boys are so interested in our heroes. If DICK MERRIWELL should take up la crosse, you boys would have to look to your laurels.

I have been reading the Tip Top for the past year, and find it splendid. It has none of the lower sort of reading in it which every boy should despise. At first my mother objected to my reading it. She only looked at the price, not at the reading matter or the moral it contained. I think if more mothers would look at the moral rather than the material side it would be a good thing. Now my mother is just as anxious to have it come as I am. I stand by the Merriwell boys to the last. And I think Mr. G. W. McNeill had better go soak his head before criticising other people. I hope also that Darrell and Dick will become friends, as did Frank and Bart, as I think there is the making of a good man in Darrell. I will close with best regards to Doris T., Zona D., Inza and Elsie, Bart, Frank and Dick, Old Joe and Buckhart. A loyal Tip Top reader, PAUL GRIFFING.

Warren, Ohio.

Thank you.

Having seen no letter from here and not having written before myself, I will now write a few lines to let you know how much I admire Tip Top. I would not miss one number for anything, for I can hardly wait for the next number. I started in with No. 294, and I have just finished 300. I think Dick Darrell and Buckhart are just as honest, square and plucky as boys can be. I am glad that Dick and Darrell have made up again and are now friends, for I could not see how such square fellows could remain enemies very long. Jealousy was the cause of their trouble. I do not blame either of them for liking Doris, for she is a very nice girl, but I do not think they ought to fight for her. I like all three of the girls, Doris, Zona and Felecia, and I like to have them have their part in Tip Top. With best wishes to Dick and his friends, and success to Mr. Burt L. Standish and Street & Smith. FRANK L. L.

Fowler, Ind.

Let us hear from Fowler again. Thank you for your good wishes.

I have been a constant reader of your wonderful weekly, Tip Top, ever since No. 60, and I have never written before, but after reading a letter in the Applause Column of No. 300, I was so mad that I just could not wait any longer to write to you about your wonderful weekly and what I think of "Tip Top's Best Friend" from Mc-rhead, Minn. (as he signed himself), but

if I had hold of him for a little while, although I am only a girl, I would soon tell him what I think of him, and it would be a long time before he would sign himself "Tip Top's Best Friend" again, for he is certainly a snob, or he would not say such a thing about Bart Hodge, who is one of the best and truest friends Frank Merriwell ever had. I am an Elsie admirer myself and I want Bart to get her, but I don't think she is too good for him, for she could not get a fellow who would make her a better husband than Bart will. I also think Frank will be happy with Inza. But I just fairly love Dick, and I think he is all-right, for he has a nature something like Frank's, but he has a temper like Bart, and I enjoy reading about him as well as I do about Frank. But I will not attempt to tell about the good Tip Top is doing, for I have written such a long letter now. I want all who are friends of Bart and Bruce to stand for them and make such a "Constant Reader" and the others feel ashamed of themselves. From a girl admirer of Tip Top.

Chicago, Ill.

MAUD DAVIS.

Thank you for your good wishes and defense of Bart. DICK MERRIWELL will indeed be flattered at your open declaration to him, but he is such a fine fellow he deserves it all.

I have read your book for quite a while, and not seeing any Applause from Rosendale, I thought I would write and tell you what the boys here think about the Tip Top. They all think it is the best five-cent book published. Next to Frank I like Bart Hodge. What is the matter with those fellows who are kicking about him? I see where readers are going to help G. W. McNeill against A. M. Hamilton. Well, Mr. Hamilton, I am only ten years old, but if I can help you I will willingly do so. What would the Tip Top Weekly be without Bart Hodge? What would Frank Merriwell's baseball team be without him? Could any other catcher go behind the bat and hold the double-shoot? No; they have been tried and found wanting. Tried and true—that is Bart Hodge all over. I think Dick will in time when he gets older make a better character than Frank, if such a thing is possible. Next to Dick I like Hugh Douglas. I think he will be one of the best fellows in the flock. Then Darrell Singleton, Kent, Burt and Teddy Frank. I agree with Remains in regard to the photograph exchange. I hope you will soon have the pictures of Dick and his friends and Dick Merriwell made. With best regards to Mr. Standish and Street & Smith, I remain,

Rosendale, N. Y.

HAPPY HOOLIGAN.

We gladly welcome one of DICK MERRIWELL'S friends to our columns! Let us be favored often.

Having seen nothing in the Applause Column from this city, I will say a few things for our club. I am a Bart Hodge man. I think Bart has had more to compete with in life than the majority of young men, and his coming out on top ought to be hailed with joy by Tip Top readers. As to taking him out of the flock, why, it is too absurd to ever think of. Say for me that those knockers ought to look before they leap. Who is most ready to fight for Frank in an emergency? What is a little temper? I pity the man that has not one. I saw a suggestion about Tip Top readers exchanging photos. I think it is a good idea. With best wishes to Frank and Dick's friends and club and regards to Bart L. and Street & Smith, respectfully,

St. Louis, Mo.

ROBT. L. AVERY.

Your remarks are few but very much to the point. Let us hear from you again.

I have just finished reading No. 220, Tip Top Weekly, and I think it is splendid. I have never written to the Applause Column of Tip Top before, so I will therefore endeavor to express my opinion of your great publication. My brother, who is now twenty, has been reading the book for the past six years, and through him I began to read them. I do not agree with Mr. McNeill and Mr. Brown in their opinion of poor, dear Bart Hodge. I like Bart in spite of his hasty temper, and I think Elsie is the girl for him. As to Frank, I think there is nobody nobler. Somebody said in No. 220 that Inza is a coward. I don't agree with him, because I don't see where it comes in. She is just suitable for Frank. I am very much pleased that Hal Darrell has become Dick's friend. I always thought he would,

and I hope that Uric Scudder will also become his friend, although I hate him. I also like Bob Singleton. I love Doris Templeton and Felecia Delores, but I hate Zona Desmond. I like Dick very much. He is a fine fellow, and I hope he will get the right girl when his time comes. I hope Mr. Standish will let Dick follow his dear brother's example, and never let Dick, Frank, Bart, Hal, Elsie, Inza, Doris, Felecia and the rest of their friends drop out. If he does, he will be minus two more readers, my brother and myself. Hoping to see this in the Applause Column soon, and with best wishes for Mr. Standish and Messrs. Street & Smith, I remain, a girl reader,

New York City.

LAURA ALICE PFLEGER.

Your letter is most pleasant, and we are always delighted to have our girl readers favor us with their views and opinions.

As I have never seen any Applause for your splendid library from this town, I thought I would write and let you know how much we appreciate your valuable publication. I am a constant reader of Tip Top Weekly, having read every number from No. 1 to date, and have my first bad one to read. As to my favorite character, of course Frank is first, with Dick a close second. In regard to the Elsie-Inza question, I would say that we all think that Mr. Standish has done exactly right. For we think that Bart should marry Elsie. We have organized a club here, and I was unanimously elected president. And now in conclusion let me say in behalf of the club and myself, that we think there is no library on an equality with your famous Tip Top. With much success to you all, I am yours, etc.,

Madisonville, Ky.

ROBERT SORBY,

Pres. M. G. C.

We wish all kinds of success and prosperity to your club, and here are our best wishes and three cheers to its president.

I take great pleasure in saying a word of praise due the great Tip Top Weekly. I have been reading it ever since there has been a news-stand in our little village. I have to walk two miles to the news-stand, but sometimes I ride my pony, Reuben, to procure my favorite paper. I can hardly wait from one issue to another to read your most interesting magazine. My three brothers, Boynton, Randolph and Michael, also read your paper with great interest. And so I will close, wishing success to Dick, Frank and Burt L. Standish. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, yours truly,

Bellefonte, Pa.

LEWIS DAGGETT.

Tip Top's greetings and good wishes to you and your brothers. Thank you for your pleasant letter.

I have been a reader of your esteemed Tip Top from No. 1 to date, and think it is the best weekly published for either boys or girls. I have read with much pleasure the many defenses of little Bart Hodge. I am and always have been an admirer of Bart, and cannot see why so many of our boys in no estimation hold second only to Frank. Frank is only a boy's friend, and that is enough to make him O. K. in my sight. Bart has saved Frank's life, and Frank has returned the compliment by saving him from disaster, and they are now, what they always shall be, friends, tried and true. No one can praise Bart enough. G. W. McNeill must have had a bad case of jim-jams when he wrote his letter. I agree with A. M. Hamilton that he and Lane Brown, too, should get a shaking. If I had had little Bart by the collar when I read his letter in No. 220, I am afraid I would have given him a few gentle shakes, and I don't believe he would have said much either. I advise him and his "partner in crime," Mr. McNeill, to read over their old Tip Tops, and see if they can't find one little thing in Bart's favor. To hear them tell it one would think he was a second Percy Jackson. He is far getting the upper hand of his temper, which is all that there is against him. Three cheers for loyal, noble Bart, and may he continue to be chief number of the flock. I should like to get acquainted with Miss Marian St. Clare. Hoping to see this in print, I remain, yours,

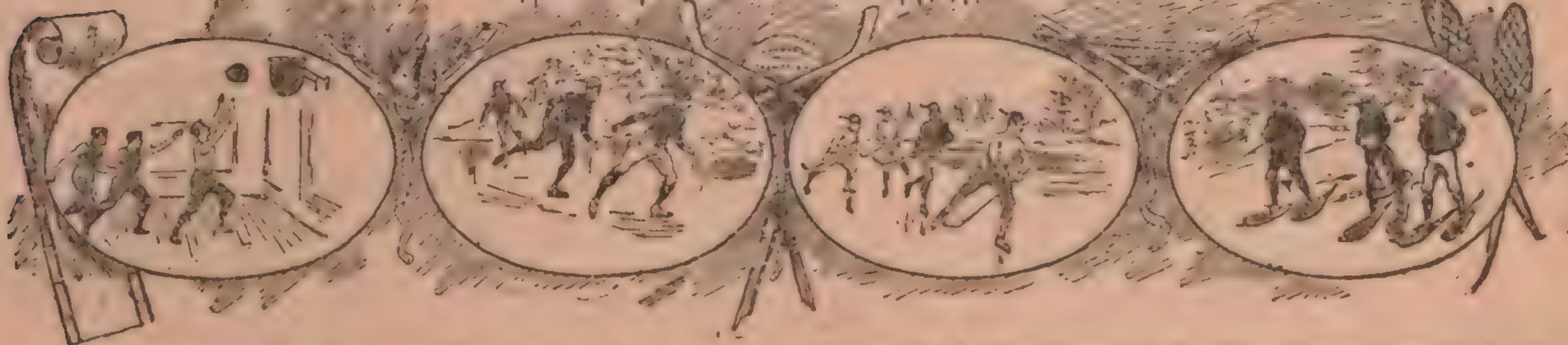
Auburn, N. Y.

A Girl Admirer of Bart.

Our girl readers all have a soft spot in their hearts for Bart, and they always are very strong in their praise of him. We are sure he will never do anything to forfeit their esteem.

TIP TOP WINTER SPORTS

CONTEST



Basket Ball for the Week.

C. Streets (Chicopee, Mass.), 42; Trackers, 12.

The C. Streets basketball team—J. Kennedy, R. G.; J. Frodema, L. G.; C. Lovering, C.; A. Lucas, R. F.; S. Tardon, L. F.
The Trackers basketball team—F. Johnson, R. G.; W. Ford, L. G.; J. Roberts, C.; R. Loven, R. F.; J. Vogel, L. F.
Manager, C. Lovering.

Little Invincibles (Hudson, Wis.), 27; Little Giants, 4.

The Little Invincible basketball team—Gibson, first half, R. F.; Anderson, second half, R. F.; King, first half, L. F.; D. Crosby, second half, L. F.; Anderson, first half, R. G.; Gibson, second half, R. G.; D. Crosby, first half, L. G.; King, second half, L. G.; Verne Crosby, C.
The Little Giants basketball team—Will Roe, R. F.; W. Johnson, L. F.; Jas. Johnson, R. G.; John Keeley, L. G.; Fred Crosby, C.
Manager, Ray Gibson.

Orioles (St. Point, Wis.), 30; Locals, 3.

The Orioles basketball team—W. West, C.; J. Schopf, F.; J. Knape, F.; E. Myers, G.; C. Kaiser, G.
The Locals basketball team—G. Bresnahan, C.; J. Smith, F.; Joe Schopf, F.; F. Roth, G.; R. Roth, G.
Manager, H. West.

Orioles, 35; Hoeffler Athletic Club, 5.

The Orioles basketball team—W. West, C.; J. Schopf, F.; J. Knape, F.; E. Myers, G.; C. Kaiser, G.
The Hoeffler Athletic Club basketball team—S. Hoeffler, C.; A. Behrardt, F.; M. Edwards, F.; L. Parks, G.; C. Little, G.
Manager, H. West.

Keystone (Philadelphia, Pa.), 60; Roslyn A. C., 0.

The Keystone basketball team—Carlins, F.; Bady, F.; Troy (capt.), C.; Fortmann, G.; A. Schafer, G.
The Roslyn A. C. basketball team—Tunney, F.; Patterson, F.; Tilton, C.; Mann, G.; Manelly, G.
Manager, Carlins.

Keystone, 50; Silver Stars, 0.

The Keystone basketball team—Carlins, F.; Bady, F.; Troy (capt.), C.; Fortmann, G.; A. Schafer, G.
The Silver Stars basketball team—MacNeill, F.; Boluf, F.; Jessen, C.; Melville, G.; Keenan, G.
Manager, Carlins.

Trinity A. A. (Philadelphia, Pa.), 68; Mt. Pisgah, 6.

The Trinity A. A. basketball team—O'Toole, F.; Lutz, F.; Kennedy, C.; King, G.; Wilson, G.
The Mt. Pisgah basketball team—Gleadhill, F.; Sayes, F.; Beacker, C.; Pratt, G.; Dawson, G.
Manager, Mr. S. Gernon.

Clippers (Sycamore, Ill.), 21; Reserves, 4.

The Clippers basketball team—Harry Hennigan, C.; George Brannen, R. F.; Ted Jones, L. F.; Fred Foward (capt.), R. G.; Otto Hoebel, L. G.
The Reserves basketball team—Herbert Stephen (capt.), C.; Geo. Quinn, R. F.; Fred Larsen, L. F.; John Britzow, R. G.; George Swanberg, L. G.
Manager, N. Shields.

Clippers, 24; Reserves, 0.

The Clippers basketball team—Harry Hennigan, C.; George

Brannen, R. F.; Ted Jones, L. F.; Fred Foward (capt.), R. G.; Otto Hoebel, L. G.
The Reserves basketball team—Herbert Stephen (capt.), C.; Geo. Quinn, R. F.; Fred Larsen, L. F.; John Britzow, R. G.; George Swanberg, L. G.
Manager, N. Shields.

Oakland (Chicago, Ill.), 27; H. P. Y. M. C. A., 0.

The Oakland basketball team—L. Larant, L. F.; E. Fargo, R. F.; T. Brunner, C.; H. Parker, L. G.; E. Weston, R. G.
The H. P. Y. M. C. A. basketball team—Young, L. F.; Chattfield, R. F.; Brosy, C.; Ditz, L. G.; Shindiger, R. G.
Manager, Earl Fargo.

Columbias (Reading, Pa.), 15; Shamrocks, 15.

The Columbias basketball team—L. Ruth, A.; C. Flechthorn, A.; P. Miller, C.; E. Kegerize, D.; C. Martin and P. Hageman, D.
The Shamrocks basketball team—W. Doyle, A.; J. Eschelman, A.; L. Egolf, C.; C. Heidler, D.; W. High, D.
Manager, P. W. Miller.

Columbias, 8; Silver Stars, 7.

The Columbias basketball team—L. Ruth, A.; C. Flechthorn, A.; P. Miller, C.; E. Kegerize, D.; C. Martin and P. Hageman, D.
The Silver Stars basketball team—E. Steininger, A.; L. Ege, A.; A. Bright, C.; C. Poujol, D.; M. Morrison, D.
Manager, P. W. Miller.

Adelphi Academy Midgets (Brooklyn, N. Y.), 22; Rubber Five, Jrs., 6.

The Adelphi Academy Midgets basketball team—E. A. Lento (capt.), R. F.; F. McCormick, L. F.; F. M. De Selding, C.; C. W. Dingee, R. G.; E. Keiser, L. G.
The Rubber Five Jrs. basketball team—D. Ritschy, R. F.; F. Short, L. F.; R. Sykes, C.; E. Fields, R. G.; R. Pelton, L. G.
Manager, C. W. Dingee.

C. B. C. (Corry, Pa.), 9; West End, 6.

The C. B. C. basketball team—Harold Hanes, L. B.; Carleton Gay, R. B.; Wilber Lambing, C.; Leo Sours, L. F.; Willie Hines, R. F.
The West End basketball team—Clarence McCarty, L. F.; Arch Fony, R. B.; Peter Dishaw, C.; Arch Steel, L. F.; Jack Dunnahue, R. F.
Manager, Willie Hines.

Co. E, Jr. (Orange, Mass.), 45; Y. M. C. A., Athol, 15.

The Co. E Jr. basketball team—Elliott, R. F.; Gray, L. F.; Marden, C.; Roche, R. B.; Liston, L. B.
The Y. M. C. A. basketball team—Seeley, R. F.; King, L. F.; Vale, C.; Pevery, R. B.; Van, L. B.
Manager, C. R. Gray.

Co. E, Jr., 31; Orange, Jr., 19.

The Co. E Jr. basketball team—Elliott, R. F.; Gray, L. F.; Marden, C.; Roche, R. B.; Phelan, L. B.
The Orange Jr. basketball team—Richard, R. F.; Sherwin, L. F.; Kenney, C.; Walker, R. B.; Roblins, L. B.
Manager, Clarence R. Gray.

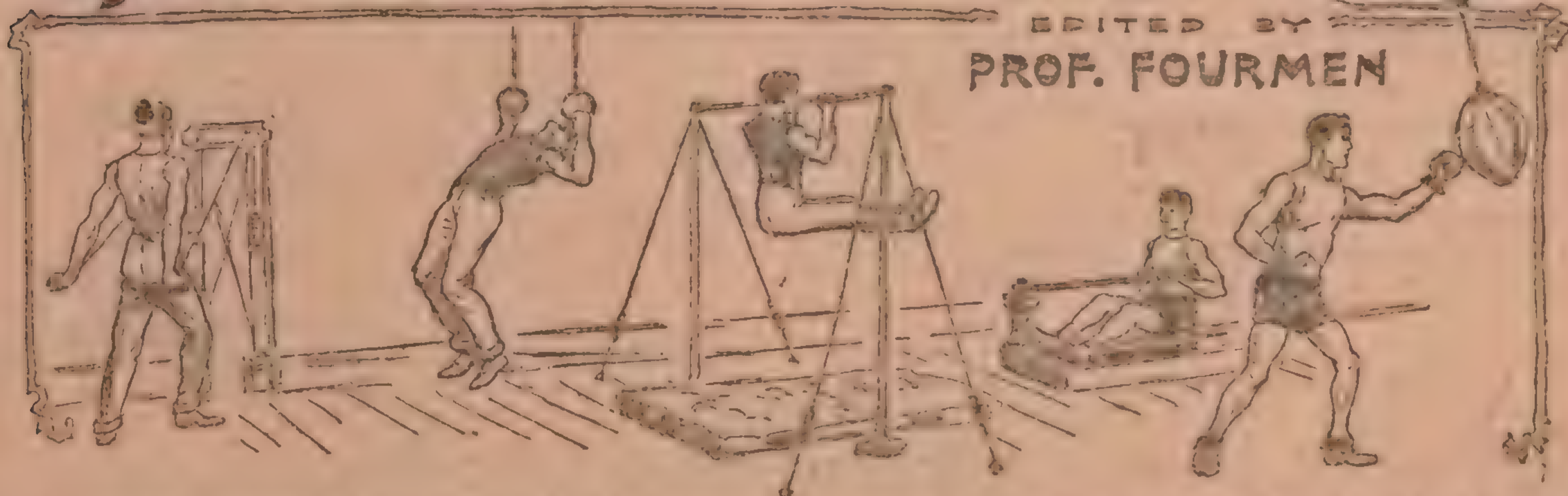
McKinney High School (McKinney, Tex.), 12; R. S. Juniors, 7.

McKinney High School basketball team—Ben Sargent, L. B.; Houston Beverley (capt.), R. B.; Ray Stacy, L. F.; Charlie Abbott, C.; Frank Lingo, R. F.
R. S. Juniors basketball team—Ray Sargent, L. B.; Herman Donner, R. B.; Isaac Crouch, L. F.; Gibbie Caldwell, C.; Annetta Marre, R. F.
Manager—C. M. Abbott.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

EDITED BY

PROF. FOURMEN



Professor Fourmen's advice, through this department, to young athletes has proven so beneficial that Street & Smith have engaged the good and learned professor to continue the department so long as there are young men and boys in this country who are anxious to develop themselves, or ambitious to become athletes. So our young athletes may continue to seek Professor Fourmen's advice, which we and they know to be of the best, through this department. "If there is anything you want to know about yourself write Professor Fourmen."

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am 16 years old and weigh 154 pounds, and am 5 feet 10 1-2 inches in height. My measurements are as follows: Chest normal, 37 inches; contracted, 33 inches; expanded, 40 1-2 inches; left bicep, 11 3-4 inches; right bicep, 12 inches; right forearm, 11 inches; left forearm, 10 3-4 inches; waist, 29 inches. Will you please tell me if I am well built for my age? When walking my neck is slightly thrust forward, and I am round-shouldered. Would you kindly tell me an exercise to correct this? My best wishes to Street & Smith, and wishing their famous weekly, Tip Top, an everlasting success. E. Y. W.

Your measurements are very good. In walking be sure to hold yourself erect and throw your chest out. Try breathing exercises and use a Whitely exerciser.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Will you please answer this question: Of late I get a headache after running or jumping, and would like to know how to stop it. Here's thanking you beforehand. S. T. R. J. BARR.

Indigestion unquestionably causes this. Do not exercise too soon after meals; eat in moderation and very slowly.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Will you please answer the following questions: Am 16 years old, weigh 131 pounds, height 5 feet 6 inches. How do they compare? I use 8 1-2 pound dumbbells. Are they too heavy? H. Q. BUNKER.

Your measurements are very good. The dumbbells should not weigh more than two pounds each.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I would be much obliged to you for favoring me with an answer to my question: I am 5 feet 6 inches, am 17 years old. How much ought I to weigh? A. H. KAUFMANN.

You should weigh about 130 pounds.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am a constant reader of the Tip Top Weekly and think it is a fine paper. This is the first time I have written to you. Will you please answer the following question? I am 16 years old, height 5 feet 10 inches, weight 105 pounds. Are these good measurements? I have one of your Physical Health Culture

books and think every boy and girl should have one. 2. When taking breathing exercises I have pains under my arms. Can you tell me the cause of them? I also have pains in my sides and around my heart when walking or running a long distance. 3. Where can I obtain your article entitled, "General Training for Young Athletes"? Thanking you in advance, D. J. A.

1. You should weigh 130 pounds. 2. You had better consult a physician about these pains, as you may have a little organic trouble. 3. My article has been published in Tip Top Physical Culture Department.

PROF. FOURMEN:

As I am a constant reader of the Tip Top I would like to ask you if my height and weight are all right for a boy 15 years 3 months old. I am 5 feet tall and weigh 88 pounds.

Yours truly, L. E. GILLIS.

You should weigh about 95 pounds.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Would you please state through Tip Top how to strengthen weak ankles. I am 14 years old and 4 feet 5 inches tall, and weigh 76 pounds. FRANK JONES.

Wear an elastic ankle supporter, which will benefit you, I am sure, and try the exercise of raising yourself on your toes. This will help the muscles of the legs as well.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Would you please inform me which is the best, to run flat-footed or on your toes? E. H.

It is best to run on the toes.

PROF. FOURMEN:

What exercises will develop the legs and make them stronger? ALBERT WARE.

Try running a short distance daily until you can run a mile or so at a stretch. Also ride a bicycle.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Being interested in all athletics, I would like you to please answer the following questions: 1. Would a 5-mile race be

injurious to boys about 18 years of age, after one month's training? 2. How can pain in the side known as "side ache," caused by running, be overcome? Please answer the above questions in the Tip Top Question and Answer Department and greatly oblige,
AN ATHLETE.

1. A 5 mile race after such a short period of training would be too much for you, and probably most disastrous in its results. 2. You may run too soon after eating or else too violently. Wait an hour after meals, and run in moderation. If the ache continues, consult a physician, but I think this is the trouble and that the remedy lies in your own hands.

PROF. FOURMEN:

As I am a reader of the Tip Top, I would like to have you answer the following questions: 1. I would like to know what exercises to take to build up my health generally, with the simplest apparatus? 2. Does it make any difference if dumbbells are used during the day instead of at night and morning? 3. What weight dumbbells should a boy of 15, weighing 137 pounds, use?
D. GOURSE.

Read my article entitled, "General Training for Young Athletes." 2. No. 3. Use dumbbells weighing from one to two pounds.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Enclosed you will find three basketball coupons. In the gymnasium here we have three basketball teams. We are nearly all the same size and age. I am a member of the first team which has played five games and has won every one, and has been scored one twice.
FRED EDMAN.

Thank you. I have filed away your coupons.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Seeing that you have advertised a basketball coupon, we, the All-star team, practiced one week, then we went against the Diamonds of Duluth and beat them 12-8. The feature of the game was the playing of the All-Star's forward, Curtis Silger. Hoping we are the lucky winners in the contest, and with regards to Street & Smith.
WALLACE CLIFTON.

Thank you.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Please answer the following questions: 1. I am 16 years old and my height is 5 feet 4 inches, and I weigh 130 pounds. Are these measurements good? 2. What will strengthen my chest? 3. Is skating good for the muscles of my legs? What hours do you suggest for my meals?
"KID MERRILL."

1. Your measurements are good. 2. Chest weights and punching bag. Also try breathing exercises. 3. Very good. 4. Eat regularly and not between meals.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I wish you would answer the following questions for me: My weight is 90 pounds; my height, 4 feet 10 1-2 inches, and my age is 14 years. How do my weight and height compare with my age? What will help one to get muscles in the legs and arms?
DICK MERRIWELL.

Your measurements are fair. To develop the muscles of your legs try running and riding a bicycle. To help the muscular development of your arms use a punching bag, chest weights and dumbbells regularly night and morning.

PROF. FOURMEN:

As I am a great lover of the Tip Top Weekly, I take the liberty of asking you a few questions about myself? I am 15 years old, and I am rather tall for my age, which is 5 feet 8 inches. Is that right for my weight, which is 126 pounds? 2. Is 20 minutes about right to exercise at a time, which is night

and morning? 3. Will you tell me some exercise that will develop the calves of my legs? 4. Are 1 and 2 pound dumbbells about right for me to use?
WASHINGTON READER.

1. You could easily weigh 10 or 12 pounds more. 2. Yes. 3. Running and bicycle riding are excellent for developing leg muscles. 4. Yes.

PROF. FOURMEN:

Kindly let me know what is necessary to develop a weak ankle? Does dancing weaken or strengthen the ankles?
CONSTANT READER.

Raising yourself on your toes will strengthen your ankles. Dancing is also a good exercise, and you might wear an elastic supporter.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I weigh 134 pounds; age 18 years, 6 months; height, 5 feet 7 inches. I play basketball, run, jump, hurdle, turn front and back, handspring and front and back flips. I use dumbbells and Indian clubs, chest weights, horizontal bar and have good measurements all around, but I do not seem to gain in weight.
PETER SCHMITT.

You probably exercise too much at a time. Take your exercises moderately and see if you do not gain flesh. Be very careful of your diet as well.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I have been reading your Tip Top Weekly for nearly four years, and can say that for any American youth who wants to be called a man that this is the paper he should read, and Frank is the example he should follow. I am 18 years old, and am 5 1-2 feet tall. My arms measure 10 3-4 inches; chest expanded, 43 inches; chest contracted, 39 inches. I weigh 125 pounds. Are my measurements good? Thanking you for answers.
T. H.

Your measurements are good.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am 12 years old, 5 feet 2 inches tall, chest normal, 32 1-2 inches; thigh, 9 3-4 inches; calf, 12 1-2 inches, and biceps, 11 1-4 inches; can lift 18 pounds 10 times. 1. How do my measurements compare with my size and age? 2. Is it all right to exercise before going to bed?
RAYMOND ROHN.

1. Your measurements are very good. 2. Yes.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am 15 1-2 years old, weigh about 110 pounds, 5 feet 8 1-2 inches tall, reach 70 1-4 inches; chest expanded, 34 inches; waist, 27 1-2 inches. Do you think that is good? I use 2 pound dumbbells, and a punching bag.
WILLIAM STAGER.

You can easily stand 20 pounds more, judging from your height.

PROF. FOURMEN:

I am 18 years, am 6 feet 3 inches in height, weigh 178 pounds; my chest measurements are 36 and 43; my waist is 36 inches; my arm is 15; my running high jump is 5 feet 4 inches; running broad jump is 21 feet 1 inch; put the 14-pound shot, 32 feet 1 inch. I have been in training four months and I have improved wonderfully. I play pitcher on the high school team. I ride a wheel 16 miles every day and use the Indian clubs and dumbbells 30 minutes each morning, and then take a rubdown. Now, am I taking proper training, and how are my measurements?
FRED COCKING.

You should weigh about 190 pounds as you are so very tall. Your regime is fine and cannot be improved upon. I expect to hear great things of you, if you keep up this course of training.

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BASKET BALL COUPON.

Name of Team.....Town.....State.....Opponent's Name.....

NAME OF TEAM

POSITION

NAME OF TEAM

Winner.....Final Score.....Manager.....

ICE HOCKEY COUPON.

Name of Team.....Town.....State.....Opponent's Name.....

NAME OF TEAM

POSITION

NAME OF TEAM

Winner.....Final Score.....Manager.....

ICE RELAY COUPON.

Name of Team.....Town.....State.....

1st Name.....

2nd Name.....

3rd Name.....

4th Name.....

Time for Four Miles.....Manager.....

ONE MILE CHAMPIONSHIP COUPON.

Name of Contestant.....

Town.....

State.....

Time for One Mile Straightaway.....

ALL-STAR SCHOLASTIC TEAM COUPON.

I believe that, who plays
on the Football Team of is entitled
to a place on the All-Star Team for the following reasons:

.....

.....

Manager

TIP TOP GALLERY



HARVARD TEAM, CHAMPIONS, 1901.

HERE is the picture of the Championship Football Team of 1901. Last season, Harvard departed from her traditions and turned out a winning team. As a rule Harvard always looks like winning at the beginning of the season, but as the weeks go by her championship aspirations begin to dwindle, and it becomes evident that her championship team has been on paper only. It would seem that the fates and furies have generally conspired against the Crimson. Her best men sustain injuries in the practice games, which make them unable to do battle in the great contests. This season the fates looked kindly on Harvard, for, with the aid Yale's own "tackle-back" formation they succeeded in giving Yale her Waterloo.

NOTICE Send us the photograph of your Basket Ball team, or your Hockey team, or your Relay team. If you are in the race for the One-mile Ice Championship, send us your photograph. Tip Top readers want to see what Tip Top Athletes look like. The Gallery will reproduce all photographs. Send them soon.

Tip Top Weekly.

(LARGE SIZE.)

If you have not read them, look over this catalogue and you will read a list of stories unexcelled in any part of this world to-day.

Don't fail to read these stories if you have not already.

- 274—Frank Merriwell's Surprise; or, Contest of the Oilskin Envelope.
- 275—Frank Merriwell's Brother; or, Training a Wild Spirit.
- 276—Frank Merriwell's Chums; or, Out Again for Sport.
- 277—Frank Merriwell's Marvel; or, Dick Merriwell in the Box.
- 278—Frank Merriwell's Young Star; or, Dick Merriwell's Great Base Running.
- 279—Frank Merriwell's Twirler; or, Dick Merriwell's Jump Ball.
- 280—Frank Merriwell's Command; or, Dick Merriwell's Rebellion.
- 281—Frank Merriwell's Support; or, Dick Merriwell's Great Work.
- 282—Frank Merriwell's Hard Hit; or, Dick Merriwell's Red Friend.
- 283—Frank Merriwell's Energy; or, Dick Merriwell's Triple Play.
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- 286—Dick Merriwell in the Hands of the Five Fiends; or, Fighting His Way to the Front.
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- 289—Dick Merriwell's Determination; or, In the Game to Do or Die.
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- 291—Dick Merriwell's Strategy; or, A Way to Treat Spies.
- 292—Dick Merriwell's Long Run; or, Saving the Day for Fardale.
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- 301—Dick Merriwell's Honor; or, The Sacrifice That Cost Him Dearly.
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- 303—Dick Merriwell Trailing the Treasure; or, Face to Face with the Pirate Captain.
- 304—Dick Merriwell's Peril; or, Left to Die in the Flames.
- 305—Dick Merriwell's Snowshoe Hunt; or, The Hidden Hut of Blue Mountain.
- 306—Dick Merriwell's Disappearance; or, The Mystery of Moaning Cave.
- 307—Dick Merriwell's Racket; or, Who Was the Traitor?

With TIP TOP No. 285 begins the now famous Fardale Series, in which Dick Merriwell has entered the good old school at which the career of Frank Merriwell also began some years ago. Thousands of young Americans will want to read of the fine things that Dick Merriwell has done, is doing and will in the future do.

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